SERMONS,

PRACTICAL AND FAMILIAR;

DESIGNED FOR

PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC INSTRUCTION.

BY THE REV. EDWARD COOPER,

RECTOR OF HAMSTALL RIDWARE, IN THE COUNTY OF STAFFORD, CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF COURTOWN, AND LATE FELLOW OF ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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PREFACE.

In the publication of modern Sermons too little attention appears to have been paid to the illiterate classes of the community. Some attempts, indeed, have been made to furnish them with discourses adapted to their capacities; but without any disparagement to these attempts, it may be safely asserted, that the supply has not been adequate to the demand. The considerate clergyman can find but few volumes written with such plainness of language, as to allow of his circulating them in his parish, with the hope of their being generally understood. This is a defect which the writer, in common with many other parochial ministers, has long felt and deplored; and which it is his desire and endeavour by the present publication in some measure to remedy. How far he has succeeded in the attempt, his readers must determine. For his own part he freely confesses, that he has fallen far short of that imaginary standard, which he has proposed to his own mind for imitation.

He is not, indeed, of opinion, that no word is to be introduced into a sermon, which is not in itself intelligible to every person who hears it. Such a degree of refinement he scarcely believes to be attainable: nor if attainable, does he deem it necessary. The general impression of a discourse may be very powerful, though the precise meaning of every word be not distinctly apprehended. If the ideas be simple, and the train of thought level to the understanding, the occasional occurrence of a word or a phrase, somewhat less intelligible, will not so interrupt the sense, as probably even to weaken, much less to destroy, the main effect; while in a *very* studious endeavour to adapt the style of a discourse to the capacity of the

ignorant, there is a danger of becoming insipid or vulgar; and thus of exciting impatience and disgust in another part of the congregation, whose favourable attention it is equally important to conciliate and secure. On these grounds the writer has not paid that minute attention to the phraseology of his sermons, which the supposed canon of composition, if rigidly enforced, would require. Where a word or a phrase, not strictly level to the lowest capacity, could not have been omitted or changed without evident injury to the sense or force of a passage, he has suffered it to remain. He trusts, however, that such instances will be found to be rare; and that few places will occur, which the unlearned cannot sufficiently understand.

As to the doctrines which characterize this volume, the writer in a former publication has given a pledge of what may be expected. The same leading doctrines of the gospel, which he before attempted to elucidate, are those, which in his present work he aims to enforce and disseminate. He then fully believed them to be the doctrines of the Bible and of the church of England; and he has since found no reason to alter his opinion.

It only remains for him to express his earnest wishes, that the Divine blessing may attend this humble endeavour, and make it instrumental in glorifying God, and saving souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Hamstall Ridware,
Dec. 19th, 1808.

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SERMON I.

THE FOOLISH BARGAIN.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matthew, xvi. 26.

NO person can hear these questions without understanding them. Their meaning is plain. They speak for themselves, and carry with them their own answer. Our blessed LORD, in asking them, clearly intended to lay down this awful and interesting truth; "That the man, who for the sake of worldly happiness, however great, shall lose his soul, will make a most foolish bargain, and in the end will bitterly repent what he has done."

This truth I shall endeavour to explain and prove.

In judging of a bargain, whether it be good or bad, two particulars must be taken into account, the thing bought, and the price given for it. These must be compared together, for it is the proportion, which they bear in value to each other, that shews what the bargain is. If the thing bought be clearly worth far less than what is given for it, we pronounce the bargain to be bad: Now in the bargain of which we speak, the thing bought *is Worldly Happiness:* the price given for it, is the *Soul.* What proportion do these things bear in value to each other? To answer this question, we must enquire into their separate value, so as to see what each of them is really worth.

I. Worldly happiness is that happiness, which is to be found in the pursuit, or the enjoyment of worldly things: that happiness, which springs from the gratification of our sensual, our ambitious, or our covetous desires. And certainly we must allow, that taken by itself, this happiness is considerable. A man doubtless feels no small satisfaction and delight, in gaining honours and riches, in exercising power, in indulging his lusts and appetites. It is not by underrating worldly happiness and by representing it as less valuable than it really is, that we shall endeavour to prove our point. We will give to it all the

advantage, which its warmest friends can desire. We will allow their enjoyments to be as great as they are said to be. We will go even farther. We will take no notice of all those interruptions and disappointments, to which, from a thousand causes, worldly happiness is liable. We will suppose that it is entirely free from these things; that the body is never tortured with pain; that the mind is never wrung with grief; that every thing goes on smoothly; that every wish is gratified, every desire accomplished, every hope fulfilled. This indeed is admitting a great deal; but not more than our Saviour himself seems to have admitted for the time; when he speaks of a man's *gaining the whole world;* which we may fairly interpret to mean, his gaining as much happiness as the world can *possibly* bestow.

But after all these allowances in favour of worldly happiness, there is one thing to be mentioned on the opposite side. There is one weight to be thrown into the opposite scale, which takes not a little from its worth, and which therefore, in enquiring into its real value, must not be passed over. It is this: all worldly happiness must come to an end. "The things which are seen are temporal." Worldly things are but for a time, for a season. They are in their nature perishable, and cannot last for ever. "The fashion of this world passeth away." Let a man's enjoyments then in the world be as great and lasting, as on the largest supposition they can possibly be, still a time must come, when they will cease. There is a day, beyond which they cannot last. When that day comes, either he will be taken from his enjoyments, or they will be taken from him. Either he will be stript of them altogether, or he will lose the power of using them, or he will be removed to a place, whither he cannot carry them; and where the having formerly had them will be of no advantage, nor the recollection of it yield any satisfaction. From this view we may form some judgment of the real value of Worldly Happiness.

II. As to the Worth of the Soul.

The Worth of the Soul will in some degree appear from this consideration, that it is the most excellent part of man. It is that part of him which thinks and wills; that part of him which governs and directs the body.

The body can do nothing without the soul. It is the soul which moves the body, and tells it where to go, and what to do. It is the soul which hopes and fears; which grieves and rejoices; which desires, and hates, and loves. If the soul be taken away, the body becomes a lifeless mass without sense or motion. But the soul can live without being joined to the body. We are expressly told, that "they which kill the body are not able to kill the soul."* The soul is a spirit, and when parted from the body, it still thinks and wills as it did before. It still feels and remembers, and is conscious of what it is, of what it has done, and of what it is doing. So that in fact a man's soul is a man's self. It is that part which is really the man: and thus we find St. Luke saying in the passage, which in his gospel answers to the text, "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose *himself*."†

But there is another consideration, which shews in a far higher degree the worth of the soul. It is this. The soul not only lives, and thinks, and feels, even when parted from the body: but it will live, and think, and feel for ever. It is immortal. It will never die. It came forth from God, and like God himself will never cease to be. It will live to all eternity.—My brethren, did you ever seriously try to consider what eternity is, or what is meant by living to all eternity? We may form some notion about *time:* for we reckon, and compare it, and so may understand something of what it is. But eternity—awful word! what can we know of it? It is above our thoughts, and beyond our understanding. We may have some idea of what it would be to live for millions and millions of years. But to think, that after these are gone, still millions and millions of years are to come; that even when these are ended, eternity is still before: to consider that at the utmost distance of time, which we can count or conceive, the soul will still be living and thinking, and feeling; and at the same time will be no nearer to an end, than it is at this present moment. What a vast, what a wonderful idea! Of what inestimable value must the soul be! who can compute its worth?

But there is yet a further consideration to be added.

* Matthew, x. 28. † Luke, ix. 25.

The value of a thing is oftentimes best known, when it is lost. Now the soul may be lost. The man, who makes the bargain in the text, who sells his soul for the sake of worldly happiness, is said to *lose* his soul. What is meant by this expression? By the soul being lost is not meant its ceasing to be; its sinking, like the body, into a senseless state, without life and feeling. In this sense the soul cannot be lost; for it will live for ever. But *how* will it live? this is the main question. Will it be happy or miserable? Will it live in bliss or in pain? It may be happy. It may live in bliss. It may dwell for ever in the presence, the favour, and the service of God. It may enjoy a glorious eternity in heaven. But on the other hand it *may* fail of all this. Instead of being happy, it *may* be miserable. Instead of living in bliss, it *may* live in pain. Instead of dwelling for ever in the presence, the favour, and the service of God, it *may* be driven from his presence, be cast out of his favour, and be counted unworthy of his service. Instead of enjoying a glorious eternity in heaven, it *may* be condemned to suffer everlasting torments in hell. And this is what is meant by the soul's being lost; its being lost to every good, and desirable, and valuable purpose; its being lost to peace, and hope and happiness; its being plunged into an endless state of grief, despair and misery.

Judge then, my brethren, what is the Worth of the Soul, and then say, Is worldly happiness well bought at such a price as this? Do these things bear any proportion to each other in value? Will worldly happiness make any amends for the loss of the soul? Surely this one consideration—that, "the things, which are seen, are temporal; but that the things, which are not seen, are eternal;"* that all worldly happiness must come to an end, but that the loss of the soul will be followed with never-ending misery—is of itself sufficient to decide the question. This one consideration proves beyond all doubt the truth which I am explaining. If a man, for the sake of enjoying one day's happiness, would willingly engage to suffer pain and torture for fifty years, should we not at once condemn his folly? What then must we say to the folly of that man, who, for the sake of being happy

* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

while he lives, should consent to be miserable for ever when he dies; who, for the sake of obtaining a short, temporal, perishable enjoyment, should engage to suffer eternal torment?—Would not such a man make a most foolish bargain?—Would he not in the end bitterly lament what he had done? Let us suppose him to have gained, were it possible, the *whole* world; to have had as large a share of worldly honour, wealth, and pleasure, as any man ever yet had, or could have. Let us suppose him to have been as great, and wise, and rich as Solomon himself; to have possessed all the means of worldly enjoyment which he possessed; to have lived in the full possession of them for the greatest number of years, which any child of Adam has ever lived; yet what will all this profit him, when he shall die, and shall "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments?" Ask him what he then thinks of his bargain, and of his wisdom in making it? Ask him, whether his past pleasures make up for his present sufferings? Whether, in gaining the world, and losing his soul, he has done well for himself? Whether, in casting up the whole account, in balancing his gains against his losses, he is satisfied with what he has done? What answer will he make to these enquiries? He will surely say, 'Ah! no. I have miserably deceived myself. I have made a most foolish bargain. I gained indeed the world; but what does the world now profit me? What am I the better for all I had, and all I enjoyed on earth? Nothing of my pleasures, or my possessions now remains. Not even a drop of water is left to cool my tongue. Had I ten thousand, thousand worlds, how readily would I give them all, that I might be delivered from this place of torment. I have caught at a shadow, but have let go the substance. I thought only of time. I forgot eternity. O that I had been wise: that I had understood this: that I had considered my latter end!'

My brethren, if you feel the force and justice of this reasoning; let me remind you how greatly you yourselves are concerned in it. The truth which I have been proving concerns you all. You have every one of you an immortal soul. You have within you that precious, invaluable treasure, which is of more worth than ten thousand worlds. It is committed to your keeping; and your own

eternal happiness or misery depends on the care you take of it. If you lose it, far better would it have been for you never to have been born. Beware then lest you make the foolish bargain described in the text. Beware lest you are guilty of the folly there set forth, and sell your soul for this world's gain.

Perhaps you judge the caution to be needless. You think that there is no danger of your acting so unwise a part. You feel assured, that if the same proposal, which was made to our blessed Lord, should be made to you, you, like him, would instantly reject it: that you would not deliberately sell your soul for "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."* And, I believe that you would not. I believe you would start with horror from such an offer. But at the same time you may be ignorantly doing the very thing, which you profess to abhor. You may be bartering away your soul for some earthly good, and still be unconscious that you are committing this folly. Remember that the salvation of the soul is a work, in which great pains, and care, and diligence are wanted. You cannot save your soul, without resisting the devil; for the devil is the great enemy of the soul. You cannot save your soul, without renouncing this wicked world, with all its pomps and vanities; for the world, if loved and followed, will ensnare and ruin the soul. You cannot save your soul without abstaining from fleshly lusts: for "fleshly lusts war against the soul."† Now, if for the sake of some earthly good, you are neglecting to do any of these things: if from the love of present gain, or ease, or pleasure, you are giving place to the devil, or are walking after the course of this world, or are indulging fleshly lusts, you are virtually selling your soul. You are preferring present gain, or ease, or pleasure, to eternal happiness. You are, in fact, willingly consenting, for the sake of these things here, to be miserable hereafter. It matters not *what* it is that you are taking in exchange for your soul. Whether it be much or little, makes no alteration in the case. You may be selling your soul as certainly for a small, as for a large portion of the world. And be assured, that you most certainly *are* selling it, if, in your endeavours to gain

* Matthew, iv. 8. † 1 Peter, ii. 11.

even this small portion, you are neglecting "the one thing needful." Your soul must be your first, your great concern. It claims, it deserves to be so. If it be not; that thing, be it what it may, which you prefer before the soul, is the price for which you are selling it. The more worthless the thing may be (if indeed the worthless things of time and sense can admit of a comparison with each other) the greater is your folly, and the worse your bargain.

Be assured also, if this be the case, that you will one day bitterly repent what you are doing. At present you may not be sensible of your folly. The god of this world may have blinded your eyes, that you see not. The things of the world appear of so much value, that you can look at nothing else. But it will not be always thus. A day is coming, when the dream will end: when the vail will be torn from your eyes, and the world will be seen in its true light: when all its profits, and all its pleasures will be seen to be lighter than vanity, and more worthless than chaff; while the importance of the soul and of eternity will rush upon the mind with a clearness and a force, of which you now have not the slightest notion. And what at that time will be your feelings? When you are lying on the bed of death; when you are about to close your eyes for ever on this world; when the whole world, if you have gained it all, cannot for a moment stay the parting breath—what will be your feelings? How deeply will your heart be torn with grief, remorse, and terror! How bitterly will you lament and condemn your folly! What will you not be ready to give, that you might but live over again, and provide for eternity! Many most awful and distressing scenes of this kind are the ministers of the gospel forced to witness. Many instances do they see of persons, who never discover the value of their soul, till, as there is every reason to fear, the discovery is too late: of persons, who like Esau, having profanely sold their birth-right for some worldly trifle, when, like him, they "would afterward inherit the blessing," find, as he found, "no place of repentance."* And still what greater numbers are there, we may tremble to think, who even go out of the world

* Hebrews, xii. 17.

without making this discovery! who, sunk into a deadly sleep, think not of eternity till they awake in the flames of hell, and find their souls lost for ever!

God forbid! my brethren, that this should be your miserable case! O that you would see these things in this your day, as you must see them in the day of visitation! Remember, that whatever the world, and your soul, and eternity will appear to you then, such they really are now. If to have gained the whole world, but to have lost your soul will then appear to be a most miserable bargain, be assured that it is a most miserable bargain now. Make not this bargain for yourselves. Be wise in time. Prepare for death and judgment. Attend to the things which belong unto your peace, your everlasting peace, before they are hidden from your eyes.

SERMON II.

THE UNFRUITFULNESS AND MISERY OF SIN.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.—*Romans*, vi. 21.

ONE of the surest means, by which Satan keeps men under his power, is by keeping them in ignorance of their state. Did they once see, in what a vile, a shameful, a ruinous service they are engaged, they would quickly leave it. Did they once see, what sin really is, they would speedily flee from it. In this view the text is particularly useful: for it sets sin before us in its true colours, and shews us what it is, when stript of every covering.

St. Paul is speaking to persons, who having once been the servants of sin, had now left that service, and were become the servants of God: and he puts to them this serious question; "What fruits had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death."—At the time when you lived in your former sinful courses, what real comfort, satisfaction or

happiness did you find in them? Did they yield you any true profit? The manner in which the Apostle puts the question, plainly shews his meaning. He knew that they had found nothing of this kind. They must be ready to own, that sin, far from having been profitable to them, had brought with it disappointment and vexation; had been followed with shame and grief; and had exposed their souls to the greatest danger.

In discoursing on these words, I shall set before you the three things, which are here stated concerning sin.

I. That it yields no present fruit.

II. That it is followed by shame.

III. That it ends in death.

I. Sin yields no present fruit; that is, nothing which deserves the name of fruit. It may furnish indeed some short gratification, some momentary pleasure. But this is not *fruit*. It does not pay a man for the trouble and danger, into which it brings him. Nothing but peace with God, and an approving conscience, can really deserve the name of fruit: and sin, so far from producing these things, totally destroys them. Sin indeed makes large promises, tempts men with flattering offers, and tells them what great things it will do for them; in the same manner as the devil tempted our Lord to worship him, by offering to him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. But as Satan then promised to give what was not in his power to bestow; so it is with sin. It cannot fulfil its promises, or make good its words. It only deceives, and disappoints those, who listen to its offers. They may amuse themselves with the expectation of great advantages. They may hope to reap much fruit.—But they are "sowing to the flesh," and must "reap corruption."—Sinners do not find in sin even that present enjoyment, which they had hoped to find. Look at our first parent Eve; what fruit had she from her sin? She had fancied that there would be some great and singular pleasure in eating of the forbidden tree. She had persuaded herself, that she should gain some special advantages by this act of disobedience; that it would make her wise, and great, and happy, like God himself. But were these expectations answered? Did she find all the good, which she had hoped for from her sin? Far other-

wise, she found herself wretchedly deceived. She was become indeed wiser than she had been before; but the wisdom, which she had gained, was not such as to add to her comfort and enjoyment. She knew good from evil; for she had lost the good, and had found the evil. Instead of being happy, she was become miserable. Instead of being like God, she had lost his likeness; and was become like the devil, whose counsel she had followed. Instead of being filled with peace, and joy, and hope in God, as she had before been; she was now torn with remorse, and guilt, and terror. This was the fruit of her sin.

Take another example. Look at Judas, who sold his master. What fruit had he in his transgression? He doubtless thought that the thirty pieces of silver would add greatly to his happiness, and would yield him much present enjoyment. In the hope of the benefits which he should procure from his sin, he "ran greedily after the reward," and betrayed the innocent blood. Was his hope fulfilled? We know that it was not. No sooner was the sin committed, than he saw it in its true light. The advantages which he had promised to himself, all fled away. He was overwhelmed with horror and despair.

But we need not go so far back for examples to our purpose. We may have recourse to living instances. My brethren, I would refer this matter to yourselves, and make you judges in the case before us. What *fruit* have you had in the ways of sin? To such of you, as being convinced of the evil of these ways, through grace have left them, and turned into other paths, to such I may confidently appeal. You, I feel assured, will readily confess, that you found no fruit in the ways of sin, that so long as you continued the servants of sin, you were strangers to true enjoyment; and that real peace and happiness are only to be found in the service and the ways of God. But *you* are not the only witnesses to this truth. I would appeal to others also; to those who are still living in the ways of sin, and yielding themselves servants to unrighteousness. I would ask them, whether *they* find true happiness in their sinful courses? I would put the question in the text to their consciences, and say to each of them, "What fruit hast thou even now in these things?"

Come thou, O drunkard, who makest it thy practice whenever a convenient opportunity may offer to indulge thy sensual appetite, and to sink the man into the beast, stand forth, and in the face of this congregation say, whether thou findest the ways of drunkeness to be ways of pleasantness and peace? Do they yield thee enjoyment sufficient to make amends for the remorse and sorrow which attend them? Say, in the midst of thy guilty pleasures, dost thou not often feel a pang of conscience, a secret misgiving, a horrible foreboding, which embitters all thy seeming joy? And in the moments of sober recollection, what are thy feelings? Art thou not wounded with the thoughts of thy wretched life? Art thou not stung with anguish at the prospect of thy health destroyed, thy property injured, thy family ruined, through thy intemperance? Dost thou not fly many a time to riot and excess, in order to drown thy recollection, and silence thy conscience? We know, whether thou wilt own it or not, that all this is the case. We know that thou canst not deny, 'My ways are not 'those of happiness.'

Can the envious, discontented, repining man speak better of the paths in which he walks? Does he find them "paths of pleasantness and peace?"

Will the passionate, revengeful, malignant character come forward and tell us, that *he* is happy? or if he did tell us so, could we believe him?

Let me turn to the slave of lust; or to the profane, ungodly scoffer; to the hardened, careless sinner; or to him, who secretly wrongs his neighbour, and by fraud or theft, strives to enrich himself. Let me separately ask each one of these, 'What fruit hast thou in these things?' He will surely answer, 'Peace is not with me.'

I would appeal to another man, to the Idolater—not him who worships gods of wood and stone,—but him who sets up his idols in his heart, and makes the world his god; who places his whole affections on the things of this life; has his treasure on earth; and labours only for the meat which perisheth. What fruit hast thou in these things? Do they yield thee true enjoyment? Do they not bring care and sorrow? Do they not frequently occasion disappointment and vexation? How often art thou unable to get the thing thou wantest! How con-

stantly when gotten, does it fall short of thy wishes and leave thee as it found thee, dissatisfied, and still wanting something more? Restless and uneasy, thou art not, thou canst not be happy.

Thus we may feel confident, that there is not one among us, whose experience will not help to confirm the truth which we are considering: not one whose conscience if fairly suffered to speak would not testify, that sin yields no present fruit. I observe,

II. That sin is followed by shame.

"What fruit had ye then in those things, *whereof ye are now ashamed?*" Shame is that confusion of mind, which arises from a consciousness of guilt. While our first parents were free from sin, they knew not shame. But no sooner had they broken the divine commandment, and had brought guilt upon their souls, than they were ashamed. Conscious of what they had done, fearing detection, and not able to face the Almighty, they hid themselves among the trees of the garden. And is not such the case with every sin? Will it not sooner or later bring shame, as its certain follower? Undoubtedly it will. For a time indeed, men may sin without feeling shame. They may even glory in their shame. They may be proud and boast of that, which ought to be their shame. But it will not be always thus. A day is coming, when every thing, even "every hidden thing of darkness," will be brought to light: when sin will be seen by all in its true colours. In that day how great will be the consternation of the wicked! They "will awake to shame, and everlasting contempt."* How will they be ashamed at the discovery of those sins, which they were not afraid to commit! When they see what sin is, how odious, how vile it is, with what unspeakable confusion will they be overwhelmed! They will be unable to look their judge in the face. Conscious guilt will stop their mouths. They will call on the rocks and the mountains to cover them. But farther, even where sin is repented of and forsaken, it is still followed by shame. These things cannot be parted from each other. The persons spoken of in the text, though no longer the servants of sin, are represented as still *ashamed* of their former evil ways. Thus the peni-

* Daniel, xii. 2.

tent Ephraim is described as "*ashamed*, yea, even *confounded*, because he did bear the reproach of his youth."* When the sinner indeed is brought to see something of the number and greatness of his sins; that they are utterly without excuse: that they have been committed against a good and holy God, who has been loading him with benefits and mercies; can he be otherwise than *ashamed* at the recollection of his folly and guilt? Was not this the case with the prodigal, when calling to mind his father's love and kindness, and his own base ingratitude, he felt that he was no longer worthy to be called a son? Is not this the state to which the Lord declares that he will bring his people Israel, when they shall "remember their own evil ways, and their doings which were not good, and shall loathe themselves in their own sight for their iniquities;" and shall "be confounded, and shall never open their mouths any more because of their shame, even when He is pacified towards them for all that they have done?"† What do we suppose was the state of Peter's mind, when he saw his guilt in having denied his Master? How great a share must shame have had in the painful feelings of his soul, when "he went out and wept bitterly?"‡ So constantly is sin followed by shame.

III. Sin ends in death.

"What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? *For the end of those things is death.*" St. James gives the same account of the matter. "When lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."§ Sin is the parent of death. It bringeth it forth, as naturally as the parent bringeth forth its young. St. Paul, in a verse or two after the text, puts the same truth in another light. He calls death "*the wages of sin*:" that recompence which sin earns, and which it will undoubtedly receive. Thus death was solemnly denounced on our first parents, as the certain consequence of sin. When God charged them not to eat of the tree of knowledge, he assured them, that death would follow disobedience: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."‖ And what is death? It is a word of the most awful meaning.

* Jeremiah, xxxi 19. † Ezekiel, xvi. 63. xxxvi. 31.
‡ Matthew. xxvi. 75. § James, i. 15. ‖ Genesis, ii. 17.

When spoken of the body, it means its separation from the soul, which is its life, and its returning to the dust whence it was taken. But death, when spoken of the soul, as it is in the text, and in the other places mentioned above (for "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"*) means the separation of the soul from the favour, the presence, and the spirit of God, which is its life, and the being for ever given up to darkness, torment, and despair. Hence it is called in the Revelation of St. John, "The second death."† Hence also it is opposed by St. Paul, in the passage before mentioned, to *eternal life.* "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."‡ Thus also in the burial-service of our church, those who perish in their sins are said *to die eternally;* and we pray *to be delivered from the bitter pains of eternal death.* In short, this is the end of sin, eternal misery in hell. It is the end to which it naturally and necessarily leads. God hath unalterably decreed, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell:"§ that the unpardoned sinner shall not escape, but shall go into everlasting punishment.

Such is the view here given of sin. From what has been said, you may have some notion of what it really is. It yields no true enjoyment at present. It brings those who commit it to shame. And if not repented of, forsaken, and pardoned, it will surely in the end destroy their souls for ever. This is sin. Yet this, my brethren, is the thing which so many love, and to which they cleave. This is the master whom they choose, and serve in preference to God; that God, who, if they truly turned to him, instead of rewarding them with shame and death, would make them happy here, and glorious for ever hereafter. Surely if you would lay these things to heart, you would not continue the willing servants of sin. Only consider what injury you are doing to yourselves, by serving such a master.

You are depriving yourselves of all the present peace and happiness, which you would certainly find in the ways and service of God. As yet indeed you know nothing of these things by experience; and therefore it is probable, that you rate them far below their real value. Not having ever felt the joys and comforts of religion,

* Ezek. xviii. 14. † Rev. xxi. 8. ‡ Rom. vi. 23. § Psalm ix. 17.

you account them to be little. But they are not little. They are great: beyond your conception great. The peace of God—that peace which God gives to his people, and which they only know—is a peace "which passeth all understanding;" a peace which the workers of wickedness can never know: for there is no peace to them. A conscience void of offence, a sense of God's favour and love, a well-grounded hope of eternal glory, are causes of delight and joy, with which all the pleasures of sin are not to be compared. Would the servants of God be so repeatedly said in the scriptures to be *happy* and *blessed* if they had not a happiness and a blessedness peculiarly their own? Could you but be persuaded to make trial of their ways, you would find them to be ways of pleasantness and peace. Could you but be persuaded to forsake the service of sin, you would soon be sensible of the present happiness which you are losing, by obstinately persisting in that service.

Besides, the longer you continue in the ways of sin, the greater unhappiness you are laying up for yourselves hereafter. You have seen, that shame must follow sin. Here or hereafter, either in this world, or in the next, you must be brought to shame for every sin which you commit. If you should live to repent of your transgressions and to sorrow for them with a godly sorrow; yet every additional sin, which you commit, will embitter that repentance, and make that sorrow deeper. The greater is your guilt, the greater will be your shame and self-reproach, whenever God, in his mercy, may bring you to a penitent feeling of your sins. But if this should never be the case. If the Lord, provoked at your past and present impenitence, should never grant to you repentance unto life: What, in that case, will become of you? What in that case, are you now doing? You are sealing your own destruction. You are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. By every additional sin, you are adding fuel to that fire which will torment your soul for ever. Consider these things. May they work in you a holy resolution to forsake the service of sin, and to choose the service of God! Surely you mean to do this at some time. Why delay the doing of it? Why delay to be freed from the bondage of the devil, from the guilt of sin, from the

wrath of God? Is sin so profitable? Is the state of a sinner so safe, so happy, that any should be loth to leave it? Can you be happy too soon? Too soon be a child of God and an heir of heaven? Too soon be delivered from the danger of dying eternally? Would you gratify and please your worst enemy a little longer, before you quit his service? Would you fix sin a little deeper in your heart, before you try to root it out? Is your life too long? Are you afraid of having too much time, and of beginning the great work of repentance too soon? Believe it Satan is not idle in destroying your soul, though you are negligent in saving it. Time is not standing still. You together with it, are hastening fast towards eternity. When a few more days, or weeks, or years, at farthest shall be past, your time of trial will be gone; your day of repentance over; your doom for ever fixed. What mean you then by delaying to flee from the wrath to come? "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Do you say, 'We will repent to-morrow?' This night your soul may be required of you. "Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation:" While it is called to-day, harden not your heart. Lie not down on your bed this night, till you have begged of God to enable you to renounce the service of sin, and to yield yourselves servants to righteousness. So "shall you have your fruit here unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life."

SERMON III.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF SERVING GOD AND MAMMON.

No one can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.—*Matthew* vi. 24.

THERE are few persons who could be brought plainly to say, even in their own hearts, 'We will not serve God.' Most men would be shocked at avowing such a resolution. But there are numbers who act in the spirit

of it; who are resolved to serve the world, and, at all events, to have a portion on earth. And what is this, but, in fact, to give up the service of God? It is true that they do not professedly intend to give it up. They mean to secure a portion in heaven, as well as a portion on earth. But in attempting this they are attempting an impossibility. Our Saviour in the text strongly condemns the folly of such an attempt. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." In discoursing on these words let us consider,

I. The Meaning and Truth of the Maxim here laid down.

II. Our Lord's Application of it.

I. The Maxim is this, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." Now the meaning and truth of this maxim may be clearly seen from a very little consideration. Every one understands what is meant by serving a master. It is spending our time, and our talents in his service. It is doing his will and his work, furthering his interests, and obeying his orders. What should we say of the man who should betray the trust which his master puts in him; who, as soon as his master's back is turned, should neglect his business; or who, whenever his own inclination tempt him, should disobey his master's orders, or sacrifice his master's interests to those of some other person? Should we say of such a man, that he served his master; No. The man who *serves* his master, is one who serves him with faithfulness, with diligence, with singleness of heart, with a mind ready and willing, and wholly given up to his service. Now for a man *thus* to serve two masters is utterly impossible. He cannot love them both alike. He cannot be devoted to both of them alike. He must secretly at least prefer the one to the other, and thus, in truth, must belong to the one, and not to the other. So long, indeed, as both those whom he calls his masters, may travel the same road, or give the same orders, he may *appear* to serve them both. He may follow both; he may obey both; and so may deem himself

the servant of both. But when they go different ways, or give different orders; when one of them turns to the right hand, and the other to the left; when one of them commands one thing, and the other gives a directly contrary command; then what will be the case? It will then be seen, which of them the man *really* serves. It will then be seen to which of them he *really* belongs. However he may have hitherto hidden his mind from others, or even deceived himself, by calling them both 'master;' yet he can now hide the matter no longer: he must now follow one of them, and forsake the other; he must now obey one of them and disobey the other; he must now clearly shew to which of them, either from interest or from affection, he is bound, and whose service of the two he really prefers.—The Meaning and Truth then of the Maxim in the text are clear. "No man can serve two masters." He may intend to do it. He may try to do it. He may for a time, seem to do it; and may even think that he does it. But when something happens which brings the matter to a trial, then his real mind is discovered: then it is decidedly seen, however ignorant he may have hitherto been of his own heart, that in fact, he "hates the one, and loves the other; that he holds to the one, and despises the other."

II. We consider our Lord's Application of this Maxim; "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Mammon is a word which signifies *gain*: and it may be understood as meaning honour, riches, pleasure, sensual gratifications, or any thing of a worldly nature, which men account to be gain, and to which they look for happiness. Of this mammon then our Lord says, "Ye cannot serve *it* and God." He does not say, "Ye *ought* not to serve God and mammon. Your duty, your interest forbid you to serve them both. But you *cannot* serve them both. To attempt it is to attempt what cannot be done. And *why* cannot it be done? for the very reason which he had stated above: because no man can serve two masters." God and mammon are two masters; and therefore no man can serve them both. They are two masters, whose interests directly thwart each other, and whose commands are continually crossing and opposing each other. For example; God says, "thou shalt love

thy neighbour as thyself!"* Mammon says, 'Love thyself best.'—God says, "If thou sell aught unto thy neighbour, or buyest aught of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another."† Mammon says, 'Make the best bargain in your power. Over-reach and defraud one another, if you are able. Push your own interests, and care not at whose loss or expence.'—God says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." "Be not conformed to this world."‡ Mammon says, 'Do as others do. Avoid being singular. Comply with the customs and practices of the world.'—Now is it possible, while God and mammon give such different orders, that we can serve them both? Is it possible, that we can love the one without hating the other; that we can hold to the one without despising the other? Nay. The very pleas, which men continually urge in defence of their sins, shew this to be the case. How often do we hear persons trying to excuse their transgressions of God's law on the ground, that their worldly affairs make such transgressions necessary? What is the language of one? When required to leave off such or such a practice, which the law of God clearly condemns, he answers, 'All persons in my circumstances follow this practice. It is necessary to the successful carrying on of my business. If I were to leave it off, I should suffer a great loss. My profits would be less. Others, who are not so scrupulous, would get the start of me. Surely these reasons are sufficient to justify my conduct. I cannot be expected so far to injure myself as to give up the practice in question!" What is the language of another? He is admonished to keep holy the Sabbath-day. He is told that many things in which on that day he employs himself or his servants, are strictly forbidden by the holy law of God. 'But such employments,' he cries 'are very gainful to me. Several of these things, if done on another day, would greatly interrupt the regular business of the week. To do them on a Sunday is a considerable saving of time. It is a piece of good management, without which I should not keep pace with my neighbours. To observe the Sabbath in

* Matth. xxii. 39. † Lev. xxv. 14. ‡ Lev. xxiii. 2. 2 Cor. vi. 17. Rom. xii. 2.

the manner enjoined would be so great a hindrance to me, that I may surely hope to be excused for breaking the command.'—Listen to a third. He is exhorted to be bountiful to the poor; to communicate freely to those that are in want. He is shewn that this merciful and liberal conduct is strongly prescribed by the divine law. What does he say? 'I must think first of myself, and of my *own* family. I have worked hard for what I have. It is not to be supposed that I should readily give it away. Besides I have a certain object in view, a possession to buy, an improvement to make, a child to set up in business, for which I want to raise a particular sum. In this case it is impossible that I can part with my money to others. Such an unreasonable act can never be required of me.' Now what does this language, in these several instances, prove? It proves that God and mammon are two masters, who require of their servants contrary things: two masters, therefore, whom no man can serve. The persons who use this language, in fact, by using it confess as much: while, by breaking God's command, whenever it happens to cross their worldly interest, they clearly shew *what* master they serve. They clearly shew, whatever they may say to the contrary, or however in some things they may seem to do otherwise, that they are devoted to the service not of God, but of mammon. Let us remember, that if God be our master, we must follow him fully. He demands the heart. He will allow of no reserves. He will not permit us to choose which of his laws we shall break, and which obey; to keep one of his precepts, and to break another. He requires us to have respect unto *all* his commandments. He will not admit of a rival in our affections; nor suffer any idol to share with him that love, which is due to him alone. He has expressly said, that "if any man love the world; the love of the Father is not in him;" that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" and that therefore, "whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."†

This may be called a hard saying. Some at least may be ready to ask, 'What then are we to do? Are we to be idle and slothful? Are we to neglect our business,

* 1 John, ii. 15.

and to let our families come to ruin? Are we to bring ourselves to poverty, till we become a burden to others? Does religion require these things of us?' No, my brethren: Religion requires of you none of these things. On the contrary it forbids you to be idle: it commands you to be industrious, to follow your worldly business with diligence and activity. It expressly declares, that "if any will not work, neither should he eat; that "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* But is there no difference between industriously following your worldly business, and making the world your master, your idol, your god? Yes: there is a very wide difference between these things. While religion permits, nay commands you, to follow with diligence your worldly calling, it also commands you to serve God, and to make Him your master. It tells you, that while you are diligently following your worldly calling, you must yet be faithfully serving God, "not slothful in business," but at the same time "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."† Are you unable to understand *how* this can be done? I will endeavour to shew you.

1. You must follow your worldly business from *right motives*. You must be diligent, not merely because diligence is the road to wealth; but because it is your *duty* to be so. You must labour in your calling for conscience sake, from a desire of doing the will of God in that station of life, in which he has placed you.

2. You must follow your worldly business by *right rules*. You must be governed, not by the corrupt maxims and bad examples of the world, not by what may be called the laws or customs of trade, but by the precepts of God's law. What he forbids you to do, you must leave undone. What he tells you to do, you must do. You must patiently submit to the losses which this conduct may occasion. You must suffer your less scrupulous neighbour to get a little richer than yourself, without envy and repining.

3. You must use your worldly gain in a *right manner;* not in gratifying you own lusts, your pride, your covetousness, or your sensuality; but to the glory of God,

* 2 Thess. iii. 10. 1 Tim. v. 8. † Rom. xii. 11.

and to the good of your fellow creatures; in acts of kindness and charity, in liberally communicating to others, in freely bestowing what God has given to you, in such a way as is most pleasing and honourable to him.

In short, the world must not be your treasure, and you must not follow nor use it, as if it were. In every thing you must sacrifice your worldly interest to the will and the law of God. You must have your treasure in heaven, and seek *first* those things which are above. This is what religion demands of you. It will be satisfied with nothing less than this. At the same time it will enable you to do all this! if you earnestly desire it, and humbly and constantly pray for grace and strength to do it.

It now only remains, my brethren, that I apply this subject to yourselves. You cannot serve God and mammon. One of them you must serve. Both you cannot serve. The question is, 'Which will you serve? Will you be the servant of God, or the servant of the world?' Before you decide, consider well the ground on which each claims your service. There are but two things which can weigh with a man in the choice of a master, *interest* or *gratitude*. If he prefer one master to another it must be, either because he believes that one *can do* more for him than the other; or because he feels, that one *has done* more for him than the other. Now on both these grounds, God most decidedly claims your services above the world. Whether you would consult your interest, or would avoid the charge of ingratitude, you cannot but choose God for your master. Let me reason this matter with you.

I. God can do more for you than mammon can do. He will reward your services with higher and better wages. You are not sure, that with all your toil and foresight, you shall acquire that worldly gain which you are now so diligently seeking. A thousand things may disappoint your hopes. But even if acquired, it cannot secure to you happiness. It cannot free you from pain or sickness, or sorrow. It cannot prevent you from feeling the loss of friends, the infirmities of age, and the fears of death. It cannot silence the voice of conscience, and give you peace at the last. And what will the world do for you at the day of judgment? Could you gain the whole

world, what, in that awful day, would it profit you? Will mammon turn aside the sword of vengeance, deliver you from the sentence of the judge, or save you from the fire of hell? No. It will leave you comfortless and defenceless. Nothing of what you have here possessed will then remain. All which you will have in that day, is the recollection of what you have been; and the misery, the remorse, and the shame, which that recollection will produce. These will be the wages, the rewards, with which mammon will repay your services. But will such be the consequence of having chosen GOD for your master? Will he thus repay your services? Far otherwise will be the case. Be faithful to him, and you shall find the blessedness of serving him. "His service is perfect freedom." Even in this life you shall be free from those tormenting fears, and anxious cares, which the servants of mammon undergo. You shall have a supply of such worldly things as are good and needful for you. You shall have peace with God, and in your conscience. You shall enjoy the delight of communion with him in prayer, the sense of his love and favour shed abroad in your hearts, and the cheering hope of a glorious immortality.—Nor will the blessedness of serving God end with the present life. Nay it will then be immensely increased. Then the advantage of having chosen Him for our portion will indeed appear. How joyfully will these words sound in the ears of every one who has served God instead of mammon, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" And when he *has* entered there, how vast will be his happiness, how inconceivable his bliss! Then in truth will he be convinced, that man does not "serve God for nought." Would, my brethren, that you may now be convinced of the same thing! Surely you cannot but see, that if you would most certainly serve and secure your own *interest*, you must choose God for your master. But further,

2. God claims your service on the ground, not only of what he *can do*, but of what he *has done* for you. In this respect, his claim to your obedience is still more clear and strong. By every tie of gratitude, you are bound to serve God. He made you what you are. Your body is the work of his hands. He breathed into you the

breath of life. He gave to you an immortal soul. He has preserved you ever since you were born. The food by which you have been supported; the raiment, by which you have been clothed; the friends, who have assisted you; the health, which you have enjoyed, have all been his gifts. They have been mercies, daily and hourly bestowed on you. Surely you are powerfully called on to devote to the service of God all those faculties of soul and body, which, in fact, are not your own, but his. There are, however, other, and still higher grounds, on which he claims your services. He has not only created, not only preserved you; but he has also *redeemed* you. Who can conceive how vast a mercy is expressed by the word Redemption! Call to mind your state as sinners: the guilt and misery which you have brought upon yourselves. Recollect, that in this wretched state God looks on you with pity, and wishes not your death: that "for the great love wherewith he loveth you," he has planned a way for your salvation. To this end, he has not withheld from you his Son, his only Son, but has given him up for you, has given him up to death even the death of the cross; that thus by the ransom of his blood, he might redeem you from eternal misery, and open to you the kingdom of heaven. Nay, that nothing might be wanting to complete your salvation, or to shew forth the riches of his grace, to the unspeakable gift of his Son, he has added also the gift of his Spirit, to dwell in you, to be your Sanctifier, your Comforter, and your never-failing Friend. Hath God done all this for you, and does he not justly claim your services? Is it not the most base ingratitude to refuse to serve Him, who has thus bought you with his own blood, who has ransomed you at such a price? What claim can the world have on you equal to such a claim as this? What has mammon done to deserve your services? Instead of furthering your happiness, it has only brought on you trouble and sorrow, sin and shame. Instead of doing any thing to save you from perishing, it has done all in its power to ruin and destroy your soul. Far, therefore, from being entitled to your favour, it deserves your just abhorrence.—"Choose you then this day, whom ye will serve." Life and death are set before you. May God

give you grace to choose that better part, which shall never be taken away from you! May every one of you be enabled from the heart to say, 'As for me, I will serve the Lord!'

SERMON IV.

MORTIFICATION OF SIN A REASONABLE DUTY.

If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. *Mark* ix. 43—48.

THE service which religion requires is a reasonable service. It demands of us nothing, but what our own reason, if fairly suffered to judge, must approve: nothing, but what is for our good, and tends to increase our happiness. If some of God's commandments seem to us to be grievous, they only *seem*, they are not really so. If they bid us do any thing, which is now unpleasant to our feelings, it is only to save us in the end from something, which it will be far worse to bear.

There is in the text, a striking instance of the truth of this remark. Our Saviour is enforcing a very painful duty: one which he knew that men would be most unwilling to perform. And *how* does he enforce it? by shewing that it is a *profitable* duty. It is one, which we cannot neglect, without manifest injury to ourselves. Painful as it may be, it will be our interest and happiness to perform it. We surely cannot but listen with seriousness and attention to a command, which comes thus recommended to our notice.

In discoursing on it, I shall set before you,

I. The duty here enjoined.

II. The argument, by which it is enforced.

I. The duty here enjoined is thus described in the text. "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut it off: if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." So that in explaining the duty, it will be necessary to shew what is the case supposed: what is the state of the member here spoken of: when the hand or the foot may be said to *offend.* To offend, in the language of scripture, frequently means to put any thing in the way of a person, which may cause him to fall or stumble. Hence, by a common figure of speech, whatever may prove a snare or temptation to any one, whatever may be the occasion of drawing him into sin, is said to *offend* him. Thus St. Paul uses the word, when he says, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is *offended*, or is made weak."* Thus Christ also used the word, when he said to the disciples of John the Baptist, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be *offended* in me:" and again, to his own disciple Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an *offence* unto me."† The apostle, by urging Jesus to avoid the cross, was a snare and temptation to him. And in this sense the word is used in the text. The member is said to *offend*, when it proves an occasion of sin. The case supposed is this; that the hand, or the foot, or the eye, become a snare and temptation to us: that they are a continual occasion of our committing sin, and bringing guilt upon our souls. Now in this case, what is to be done? What is the duty required of us? We must part with the *offending* member. However painful the operation, however severe the loss may be, we must undergo the pain, we must submit to the loss. There is no choice left to us in the matter. We must not consult our feeling. We must "not confer with flesh and blood." One thing only is to be done. Cut off the hand or foot. Pluck out the eye.—Such is the duty here described. But how then are we to understand this duty? Are we to suppose, that our Lord meant us to take it in its plain literal meaning, and in that only? Did he intend, that we should really cut off our hand or foot, and pluck out our eye; and did he intend nothing more than this? Doubt-

* Rom. xii. 21. † Matthew, xi. 6. xvi. 23.

less he designed in this particular instance to lay down a general rule. He designed to shew us *how* we are required to act in every case like that which he had stated. Every thing, which may prove a stumbling-block in our way, must be treated, as the offending member is to be treated. Be it what it may, be it something as useful as a hand, as serviceable as a foot, as dear and precious as an eye: be it something, a separation from which will be as painful as a separation from a part of our body; yet if it be a snare and temptation to us; if it be an occasion of sin, it must be parted with. There is no other course to be followed. Self must be denied. The fleshly lust must be crucified. The evil habit must be rooted out. The unlawful gain must be given up. The beloved idol must be renounced. In short, the duty here enjoined, is the mortification of sin. Now that this is a very painful and difficult duty cannot be denied. Our Lord himself knew that it would be so. The way in which he describes the duty, shews us what he thought of the pain and difficulty attending it. He would not have compared it to the cutting off a hand or foot, or to the plucking out of an eye; if he had not known that a compliance with his command would be a very severe operation. He does not however on this account withhold the command. Painful as the duty is, he still enforces the discharge of it. Let us then see,

II. The argument by which he enforces it.

His argument is shortly this; that it is *better* for us to do what he enjoins. And why better? Because not to do it, will certainly bring on us greater evils hereafter. And it is better to suffer a present evil, however great, than by avoiding it to incur a greater evil in the end. It is thus that men reason and act in common things. They will endure present loss in the hope of future gain. They will sow with toil now, in the prospect of reaping at some distant time. They will often submit to much self-denial, in order to amend their health. They will sometimes consent even to lose a limb, that they may save their life. Now it is thus that our Saviour wishes us to reason and act in the case before us. He would lead us to mortify sin on the grounds, that though it be a very painful work, yet *not* to mortify it will in the end be followed with con-

sequences far worse. This is his argument. To feel the force of it, we must see what these consequences are. He states them to be two.

1. We shall be shut out from heaven. When our Saviour says, that it is "better to enter into life maimed or halt, or having one eye;" he clearly means it to be understood, that without suffering these losses at present, we shall never enter there. In other words he declares, that the mortification of sin, which he here enjoins, is absolutely necessary, in order to our being received into heaven. Without mortifying sin now, we can never be admitted there. And is not this a truth, which the whole Bible confirms? There is not any one point more plainly laid down in Scripture than this, that unmortified sin will certainly shut a man out of heaven. Consider, what is the character of those, who are represented as going to heaven. They are "the pure in heart." They are those, who, "sow to the spirit," and "have their fruit unto holiness." They are such as "take up their cross daily;" as "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;" as "put off concerning their former conversation the old man." Heaven is said to be the inheritance of *the saints*, "an inheritance among them, which are sanctified."* It is expresssly said, that "to be spiritually-minded is life;" and that "If we mortify the deeds of the body we shall live."† Surely these texts clearly prove that mortification of sin is a necessary part of the character of those, who enter into heaven. Attend then to the following passages, which in still plainer language, speak the same truth. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."‡ "This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God."§

"They that do the works of the flesh, shall not inherit the kingdom of God."‖ Into the new Jerusalem "there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither

* Col. i. 12. Acts xxvi. 18. † Rom. viii. 6, 13. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 9. § Ephes. v. 5. ‖ Gal. v. 21.

whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."* "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."† There can be no need of adding more on this subject. These texts speak fully to the point. What in fact is it, that makes the gate into life strait, and the way that leadeth to it narrow, but the necessity of practising that very self-denial, that mortification of sin, which is here enjoined, in order to our entering into life? Without practising these things the way can never be found by us; the gate must ever be shut against us.

2. Another consequence of disobeying the command in the text will be this, that we shall be cast into hell. When our Lord says, that it is better to enter into life maimed or halt, or with one eye, than having two hands, two feet, or two eyes, to be cast into the fire that never will be quenched; he plainly teaches, that such must be the end of all, who refuse to make the sacrifices required of them. If they will not deny themselves and mortify their lusts, they must be cast into hell. And is not this also a truth, which the whole Bible confirms? Where in fact do we hear of any middle place between heaven and hell? It is constantly said in Scripture that all men must go to the one, or the other of these places. There are but two ways, the way of life and the way of destruction: and consequently there are but two ends, to which they lead. In the awful representation of the day of judgment, in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, our Lord mentions but two classes, into which all men are divided, the goats and the sheep; and but two states, into which they go, "everlasting punishment," and "life eternal." Those who sit not down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, are described as being cast into outer darkness. Those who are "not counted worthy of the kingdom of God, will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."‡ These passages prove to us, that such as are shut out from heaven, will be cast into hell: and this therefore must be the end of those, who obey not the command in the text. But there are still other passages, which bear more directly on this point. "To be carnally minded is

* Rev. xxi. 27. † Hebrews, xii. 14. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 9.

death." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."* "they that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."† "The fearful and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."‡ "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."§

Such then will be the consequences of disobeying the command in the text. We shall be shut out from heaven. We shall be cast into hell. Surely these consequences will be far more dreadful than any which will arise from obeying the command. Admit, that to mortify sin will expose us to present loss and pain: yet the loss of heaven will be greater; the pains of hell will be worse.

Consider what it is to be shut out from heaven. Heaven is that place of blessedness which God has prepared for them that love him. Glorious things are spoken of it, such "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." Little indeed can we at present know of the happiness of heaven: but yet enough is said of it in Scripture to fill us with the highest ideas of its greatness and excellence. We are told of the place itself, that, "it hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof."‖ We are told of those who gain an entrance there, that they "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more:" that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."¶ But especially we are told, that the happiness of heaven will be without end. It is "*everlasting life.*" It is "*eternal glory.*" It is "*an incorruptible* inheritance:" "a kingdom, *which cannot be moved.*" What then will it be to be shut out from heaven! To see others admitted to this blessed and glorious place, while we are refused an entrance into it:

* Rom. viii. 6. 13. † Gal. vi. 8. ‡ Rev. xxi. 8. § Matt. xiii. 41, 42.
‖ Rev. xxi. 23. ¶ Rev. vii. 16. xxi. 4.

to see others enjoying its unspeakable happiness, while we are for ever cut off from it: how agonizing will be the sight! how dreadful will be the anguish of beholding it! What grief and horror will tear the soul on thinking what it has lost!

Consider further what it is to be cast into hell. This is a subject on which the ministers of the gospel have no pleasure in speaking. They are loth to begin, and unwilling to dwell on it. But they must be faithful to their office. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," they must not hide them; nor "shun to declare all the counsel of God." They must not keep back from their hearers, through any mistaken fear of offending them, what the Scriptures make known of hell, that fearful place of torment, which the Almighty in his righteous judgment has prepared for the punishment of his incorrigible enemies. It is a word, indeed, however lightly used by thoughtless men, of most awful meaning. It describes that state of wrath, that pit of destruction, that outer darkness, where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Of the torments of hell, the Bible gives no particular and exact description; nor is it probable, that at present we could conceive or apprehend them. Enough, however, is said to convince us that they are very dreadful. The most frightful images are used to represent them. In the text itself we meet with such a view of them, as may well strike terror into our inmost soul. Three times in this passage does Jesus Christ himself set them forth under the ideas of a *gnawing worm*, and a *burning fire*: ideas, than which we can conceive none to be more terrible; for they imply at once both the inward agonies of remorse and despair; and the outward agonies of pain and torture. Besides let us remember, that the sufferings of hell, like the joys of heaven, are without end. The worm is the worm that "*never dieth.*" The fire is the fire that will be "*never quenched.*" What then will it be to be cast into hell! To endure unutterable torments both in body and soul, and that for ever! To dwell with everlasting burnings! To have no rest day nor night! How do these considerations give weight to the argument in the text! Can we think of all these things, and not feel the force of our Lord's reasoning? Is it not *better*

now to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye, to mortify sin and deny the flesh, rather than to be shut out from heaven, and to be cast into hell? Is it not *better* to suffer any losses, and make any sacrifices here, than to lose eternal life, and be plunged into everlasting misery hereafter? Are we not in our judgments convinced, that the duty enjoined in the text is a *reasonable* duty?

This, my brethren, was the conviction to which, on beginning the subject, I wished to bring you. If I have so far gained my point: if I have led you to see that the duty enjoined in the text, though it be hard and painful, is yet a necessary duty; one, which your own judgment cannot but approve; one, which your own interest requires you to perform: it now only remains, that I endeavour to stir you up to the discharge of it. To approve the command is not enough, you must obey it. Nor think to get rid of the conviction, to which you are brought by supposing that the duty is one, which belongs to others, and not to yourself. It belongs to all, and to you among the rest. The case supposed is not one which seldom happens, and which concerns only few persons. Every person has naturally some member which offends him: some sin, which "most easily besets him:" some evil propensity, to which he is most readily inclined: some lusts of the flesh, by which he is most strongly tempted. Here then must the work of mortification begin. To the root of this tree must the axe be decidedly laid. Examine therefore yourselves. Look each of you into your own heart and life, into your tempers, your emyloyments, and your circumstances, and see whether, in all, or in any of these, there be not yet remaining some part of "the old man," which the command in the text requires you to put off: whether there be not yet some hand, or foot, or eye, which still *offends* you. Is there any evil passion which you have been in the habit of indulging, either pride, or anger, or lust, or malice, or covetousness? Is there any sinful practice to which you have been addicted, either drunkenness, or fornication, or dishonesty, or falsehood, or evil-speaking? Are you engaged in a calling, which you cannot follow with a good conscience? Is there some branch of your business which, though profitable, is forbidden by the law of God?

'Are you in a situation, which, however desirable in other respects, yet necessarily draws you into sin? Have you made friendships and connections, which, though in a worldly view advantageous, in a spiritual light are hurtful, and prove a constant snare to your soul? All these are cases supposed and intended in the text: cases in which you are called upon to perform the duty there enjoined. Perform it then, my brethren. Cut off the hand. Pluck out the eye. Deny that evil passion. Renounce that sinful practice. Give up that unlawful calling. Lop off that forbidden branch. Leave that ensnaring situation. Withdraw from those ruinous friendships and connections. —Do these commands sound harsh? Remember, you have already seen and owned them to be *reasonable.* The flesh, we know, will protest against them, and will plead strongly for indulgence. It will tell you, that 'you will be torn from enjoyments, which habit has made a second nature: that you will lose your pleasure, ruin your prospects, make the world your enemy, and bring on yourself disgrace, contempt, and ridicule.'—Listen not to these suggestions. Silence them all by this one thought, that it is *better* to suffer these things, than to be shut out from heaven, than to be cast into hell. Recollect that "it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."* Come out and be ye separate. "Put away the accursed thing from you." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

For your direction and encouragement in the discharge of this great duty, I would remind you, that if you seriously desire to set about the work, there is a powerful friend, who is ready to assist you with all needful strength and help. It is only "*through the Spirit.*"† that you can mortify the deeds of the body: but this Spirit is given to all who pray for it. "Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."‡ It is only through the good Spirit of God working in you, and with you, that you can part with the offending member. But through Him you may certainly do it. If you call upon him, he will strengthen your weakness, and will "work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."§

* Deut. xxxii. 47. † Rom. viii. 13. ‡ Luke xi. 13.
§ Philip. i. 13.

Nay, through his grace you shall find the work itself far less difficult than you may now suppose it to be. By his divine consolations he will lessen the pain, and abundantly make up the loss even in this present world. He will provide you with new comforts, new pleasures, new friends in the room of those which you may give up. He will bestow on you better riches than those which the world can furnish. He will give you inward peace, and abiding joy, and rest unto your soul. Pray then for the Spirit. Go forth in his strength. By his help " crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin."*

SERMON V.

THE DAY OF ACCOUNT.

Give an account of thy Stewardship.—*Luke* xvi. 2.

BOTH reason and the Bible agree in teaching us, that this life is a state of trial. It is the time allowed to us for working out our salvation and preparing for eternity. Short then as this time may be, our everlasting condition depends on the use or abuse we make of it. We shall be happy or miserable for ever, accordingly as we now improve or waste the talents entrusted to our care. God grant! then, my brethren, that we may work, " while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work!"†

The words of the text are taken from the parable of the unjust steward: the chief design of which was to shew, that godly people, in following after heavenly things, may do well to copy the diligence and foresight, which wicked men use in their pursuit of earthly things. My business however, in the present discourse, is not with the parable itself, but only with that particular passage, which I have read to you from it: a passage, which speaks to us in a most solemn and awful manner, " Give an account of thy stewarship." From these words I shall set before you two important truths.

I. That we are Stewards.

* Baptism Service. † John ix. 4.

II. That we must one day give an account of our stewardship.

And may the consideration of these truths affect our hearts suitably to their vast importance!

I. We are Stewards.

This is true of us in general as men. It is more particularly true of us as Christians. The New Testament frequently puts the matter in this light. While the ministers of the gospel are called "Stewards of the mysteries of God;"* private Christians are also said to be Stewards of the manifold grace of God."† But it is in the parable of "the Talents,"‡ that we find the clearest view of this truth. The whole parable goes on the supposition that Christians are the stewards of Jesus Christ. He is their master, who delivers to them his goods, with which they are to trade in his absence, till in the end he returns, and reckons with them. Now, there are three respects in which I shall particularly shew, that we are Stewards.

1. Forasmuch as we are put in trust of things, which are not our own. Stewards are those who have the care of other men's goods. They are not owners of the property, which they manage. It belongs to some other person, who entrusts it to their keeping. Thus it is with us. We have no property of our own. We have nothing which really belongs to us. Christ is the great Proprietor of all. To Him, every thing which we have, belongs. Our lives are received and held from him. Our bodies and souls are not our own, but his; for he has "bought them with a price."§ Our time, our health, our money; the powers of our mind, the means of grace, the opportunities of being useful, which we enjoy, all, are talents, which he has put into our hands. They are goods committed to our care by him, who "divideth to every man severally as he will."—How ought this view of things to check our pride, and to bring down the high thoughts, which we are apt to have of ourselves! My brethren, what have we, whereof to be proud? We have nothing of our own; nothing but what we have received. Let us not take credit to ourselves for things which do not belong to us. Let us know our own place. Let us know what becomes us, and be humble.

* Cor. iv. 1. † 1 Pet. iv. 10. ‡ Matt. xxv. 14. § 1 Cor. vi. 20.

2. We are stewards, inasmuch as we are required diligently to improve our talents in our master's service and to his glory. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."* They are not to be slothful and indolent in the discharge of their office. They are to be careful and active in turning to the best account the goods committed to their trust. The master in the parable is represented as saying to his servants, when he delivered to them the pounds, "Occupy,"—that is, be busily employed in trading with these my goods, "till I come." And the same charge is given to us Christians by Christ our Master. Think how many admonitions there are in Scripture to fidelity and diligence in doing the will, and promoting the glory of him, whose servants we are. "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."† And we are expressly told, that the improvement of our talents must bear a general proportion to their number and value. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."‡ How should this consideration keep down every envious and repining thought at the supposed scantiness of our own gifts, compared with those of others! Have we little committed to us? Instead of complaining that we have no more, let us seek to improve that little. Our wisdom lies not in coveting great talents to ourselves, but in making a right use of those whatever they may be, which are "given to us to profit withal."

3. We are Stewards inasmuch as we are liable every day to be put out of our office. Stewards have no certainty of keeping their place. They hold it only at the will of their employer. He may make any change which he pleases in the kind and quantity of the goods committed to them; or he may altogether take away their stewardship, whensoever he thinks fit. Such also is the case with us. We have no security of being continued in our office. We know not how long we may be allowed to hold it. We are entirely dependent on the will of our master Jesus Christ. He may make what altera-

* 1 Cor. iv. 2. † 1 Cor. vi. 20.—x. 31. ‡ Luke xii. 48.

tion he chooses in the number and the nature of the talents, which he entrusts to our care. He may take away one gift. He may lessen another. He may deprive us of health or of riches. He may give to us fewer means and opportunities of doing good. Or he may at once strip us of our employment, and put us out of our office. He may say to any one of us at any time, "Thou mayest be no longer steward."—"This night thy soul is required of thee."—How greatly should this thought quicken our endeavours in redeeming the time and improving our talents! Is the space allowed us for trial so uncertain? Do we so little know when our stewardship may end? Then let us redouble our diligence in faithfully discharging our office while it lasts. Let us work while we have time and opportunity, that at whatsoever hour our Lord shall come, we may be found ready.

This argument receives additional weight from the other truth, which remains to be considered,

II. That we must one day give an Account of our Stewardship.

Whether our time of trial be long or short; whether our talents be many or few; a day of Account must come. Though it was long before the Lord of the servants came, yet at last he returned and reckoned with them. Every one of them was called upon to give an account of his stewardship. The man who had received one talent was required equally with him who had received ten talents, to shew what he had gained by trading. Thus will it be with us. Christ will call every one of his servants to account. Whatever may have been their station or condition in life, whether they have been high or, low, rich or poor, in this respect there will be no difference. Christ will surely say to every one of them, "Give an account of thy stewardship." None will be too great, none too mean to escape from this enquiry. The king and the slave; the rich man who fares sumptuously every day, and the begger who is fed with the crumbs from his table: the saint and the sinner must alike give up their accounts. There is no one truth in Scripture more plainly insisted on than this. It is expressly said, that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whom he hath ordained," even

Jesus Christ: "for the Father has committed all judgment to the Son;" and "He it is, which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."* Therefore "we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ;" and then "every one of us shall give account of himself to God."† The solemnities of this great day are described in the most awful language. "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations."‡—The examination also, which will be made into men's lives and characters, will be most strict and searching. "The books shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things, which are written in the books." "Every idle word, that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."§—And for what purpose will this examination be made, this account be required? For the most solemn and important of all purposes: that "every one may *receive* the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad:"‖ that every one may receive his just recompence of reward, and be sentenced to that state of happiness or misery, in which he will remain for ever: that the faithful stewards, who have improved the talents committed to them, may "have praise of God," and be admitted into the joy of their Lord: that the slothful and wicked servants, who have buried or wasted their master's goods, may be exposed, condemned, and "cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." ¶

These, my brethren, are truths, which ought to make a deep impression on every heart. But to aid and increase this impression, I shall go more into particulars. Having

* Acts xvii. 31. John v. 22. Acts x. 42. † Rom. xiv. 10. 12.
‡ Matt. xxv. 31, 32. 1 Thess. iv. 16. § Rev. xx. 12.
Matt. xii. 36. 1 Cor. iv. 5. ‖ 2 Cor. v. 10.
¶ Matt. xxv. 46.

shewn you that we are Stewards, and must one day give an account of our Stewardship, I shall endeavour, by way of application, more clearly and distinctly to point out to you the *nature* of that account; *what* it will be, and *how* it will be required of us. With this view, I shall set before you what we may reasonably conclude will in that day be the grand subject of enquiry to all the servants of Christ. Let us suppose this our great Lord and Master then speaking to every one of us in these solemn and searching words:

"Give an account of thy stewardship." Call to mind the goods and talents which I entrusted to your care; and shew what use and improvement you have made of them.

'I gave to you a soul, a reasonable, an immortal, an invaluable soul, I committed this precious treasure to your keeping.—What have you done with it? Have you lost, or have you saved it? What have you done to save it? Have you made the care of your soul your *chief* concern? Amidst all your engagements and employments in the world, has it been your grand, your first business to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling?" I admit that the work was hard, the labour was great, the difficulties were many; but I left you not without sufficient help. I am not the hard master which some represent me to be. I do not expect to reap where I have not sown, nor to gather where I have not strewed. I provided you with ample means for the saving of your soul. Have you carefully and faithfully employed these means?

'I gave to you my *Word*. What use have you made of this gift? It was "able to save your soul;" "to make you wise unto salvation."* It was intended to be "a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your paths."† Have you used it as such? Have you "received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God?"‡ Have you read it, meditated on it, prayed over it, and sought for grace, that you might understand it, and that it might be mixed with faith in your heart? Have you practised what you did understand of it? Have you governed your life by its holy precepts, doing what it commands, and abstaining from what it forbids? Have you believed its precious

* James i. 21. 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Psalm cxix. 105.
‡ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

promises, casting all your care upon them, and patiently waiting for their accomplishment?

'I gave to you my *Sabbaths.* How have you employed this gift? My sabbath was designed to be a day of *holy rest.* I commanded you on that day to cease from worldly labour—not that you might waste the hours in idleness and worldly pleasure—but that amidst your earthly callings, you might have time to attend to your soul, and to provide for eternity. I knew that you were prone to forget these things. I knew that unless some set time was fixed for more especially furthering the work of your salvation, the work itself would be greatly hindered and neglected. For your sake, therefore, I gave to you the sabbath. I charged you in the most solemn manner to *remember* to keep it holy: and I added the promise of a blessing, if you would diligently observe my command, and would employ this sacred day to the purposes, for which I had separated it from all the other days of the week. Have you used it thus? Have you habitually made it a day of *holy* rest, of religious exercise? Have you employed it in taking care of your soul, and in making yourself fitter for heaven? Look back on the many sabbaths which you have enjoyed. Call to mind the way in which you have spent them. They were talents committed to your trust. Have you duly improved them?

'I gave to you my *Ministers.* How have you profited by this gift? I sent them to "watch for your souls;" to remind you of your dangers, and your duties; to shew you the way of peace; to be your spiritual guides and comforters, helpers of your joy, and furtherers of your salvation. They were my ambassadors, who came to you in my name, invited you to my kingdom, and prayed you in my stead, to be reconciled unto me. How did you receive them? Did you "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake?"* Did you take in good part their friendly admonitions? Did you listen to their words with reverence and attention? Did you pray for a blessing on their labours? Did you wait on their ministry with a view to your own spiritual edification? Did "your profiting appear unto all men?"

'I gave to you the privilege of *Prayer.* Have you

* 1 Thess. v. 13.

improved this privilege? I opened to you a way of access to the throne of mercy. I commanded you to "pray always and not to faint."* I exhorted you "in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let your requests be made known unto God."† I taught you to pray "in my name."‡ I promised that all things whatsoever you should ask in prayer believing, you should receive."§ Have you availed yourself of this privilege? Have you turned it to good account? Have you prayed constantly, earnestly, in my name, in faith? Have you "cried after knowledge, and lifted up your voice for understanding?" Have you daily "poured out your soul" before God, and humbly sought him in every time of need?

'I gave to you the *Promise of my Spirit.* Have you prized and improved this gift? It was this gift which crowned the whole. Had this gift been wanting, every other would have been bestowed in vain. My word, my sabbaths, my ministers, the privilege of prayer would have profited you nothing, without my Spirit working with them in your hearts. It was my Spirit alone, which could give a blessing to those means, and make the use of them serviceable to your souls. But this my Spirit is freely promised to all who asked me.‖ Have you asked me? Have you anxiously desired me to give my Spirit to *you?* Have you avoided every thing, which might grieve and vex him, and drive him from your heart? While you read and heard my word, while you kept my sabbaths, attended my ministers, and drew near to me in prayer, did you do these things trusting to the promised assistance of my Spirit, and hoping in the use of these appointed means, to have his grace and power increased and established in your soul?

'And now what is the *fruit* of all that has been done? In what state do I actually find your soul, now that I require it at your hands? This is at last the test, which must decide the point in question. The way in which you have managed your stewardship, will best appear from the simple fact of what your soul now is. Is it pure and holy, dead to sin, and alive unto God, made ready for heaven, for living in the presence of God, and in the

* Luke xviii. 1. † Phil. iv. 6. ‡ John xvi. 23. 26.
§ Matt. xxi. 22. ‖ Luke xi. 13.

company of saints and angels; a vessel unto honour sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work?"* This is the state, in which I expect to find your soul. This is the state, in which, if you have faithfully improved your talents, I shall find it. Do I find it thus? Is such the state of your soul in this great and solemn day of account?'

My brethren, I know not what reply you will make to these inquiries in that great day. God grant! you may be able to shew that you have been faithful to your trust, and so may deliver up your account with joy! But remember, that you never can do this, unless you now give diligence to make "your calling and election sure."† Opportunities lost, and talents wasted, must lead to shame and misery. Time is flying away on a swift wing. Every day, which passes over our heads, is swelling the amount of that long reckoning, which we must hereafter give. Let us lay these things to heart, and live with this truth ever in our minds, that "after death cometh the judgment."‡

SERMON VI.

SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF TRUE RELIGION.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.—*Galatians* vi. 15.

TRUE Religion is to us "the one thing needful;" for without it we can have no real peace in this world, nor any happiness in the next. It is then of the highest importance to us, to have right notions of religion; to know what it is, and in what it is placed. And this is the more necessary, because there are so many mistakes on the subject; because there are so many things, which pass for religion, when in fact they are very far from being what they pretend to be. In this view the text is particularly useful: for it gives in few words a description

* 2 Tim. ii 21. † 2 Peter i. 10. ‡ Heb. ix. 27.

of what we are so greatly concerned to know. "In Christ Jesus," that is, in the Christian religion, which is the only true religion, what alone "availeth any thing;" what is of any value, or proves that we have any share in the blessings of the gospel, is "not circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." In this passage we may consider the apostle as pointing out to us two things.

I. What True Religion is not.

II. What it is.

I. True Religion is "not circumcision nor uncircumcision." Circumcision was a Jewish sacrament. It was the rite appointed by God as the door into the Jewish church. It was the sign and seal of his covenant; and under that dispensation the distinguishing mark of his people. So long therefore as the Jewish church and dispensation lasted; this ordinance could not be neglected by any, who would be truly religious. Though even then the mere performance of the ceremony did not make men religious; much less did it form the whole of true religion. But the gospel, when it came, put an end to the ceremonial law. The Christian church came in the place of the Jewish church. And the sacrament of baptism was appointed by Christ as the door into the Christian covenant. From that time then the rite of circumcision ceased to be a sacrament. The performance of it was no longer enforced by the command of God. It was henceforth a ceremony perfectly indifferent. Whether a person was circumcised or not, became a matter of no consequence. If a Christian happened to have been circumcised, as he was not on that account the better, so neither was he the worse, provided he did not trust to this ceremony for salvation, and so put it in the place of Christ. On the other hand, the uncircumcised Gentile, who embraced the gospel, was equally admitted to all the privileges of Christianity. His wanting this mark did not shut him out from the blessings of that church; "where there is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all and in all."* Thus then, as says the Apostle in the text, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision." True religion is not placed in these

* Col. iii. 11.

things. Nor in fact is it placed in any outward forms, rites, or ceremonies. This is the general truth, which the Apostle may be understood to teach. And a most important truth it is. For men ever have been prone to rest in these things. They naturally prefer the form of godliness to the power of it. They find it easier to perform rites and ceremonies, than to practise faith and holiness. Hence it has come to pass, that those teachers who have laid an undue stress on outward things in religion, have always found numbers ready to believe and follow them. It was so in the Galatian church, when St. Paul wrote his Epistle. And it has been more or less so in every age of the church. In our own days we are not altogether free from this error. So that to expose and condemn it is still a necessary part of a minister's duty. He is still called upon to remind his hearers of this important truth, that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision."

In the full meaning and spirit then of this truth, let me remind you, my brethren, that True Religion is not an outward thing. It does not consist in names or forms, in distinctions or privileges, in meats or drinks, in rites or ceremonies. This general truth contains many particulars.

You are not religious merely because you have been baptised. Baptism indeed is one of the Christian sacraments. And he that would be saved, must "repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."* But baptism in the Christian church, like circumcision in the Jewish, does not of itself make men religious. What St. Paul says of the Jew, is equally true of the Christian. "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly."† Nor is a man a Christian, merely because he has received the outward seal of the covenant. Simon Magus believed, and was baptised: and yet St. Peter afterward assured him that he "had neither part nor lot in the matter: for his heart was not right in the sight of God:" he was "still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."‡ Now what was his case, may be yours. Though you have been baptised, you may yet have no part nor lot in the matter.

* Acts ii. 38 † Rom. ii. 28. ‡ Acts viii. 21. 23.

Again, you are not religious merely because you are called a Christian, and have been born of Christian parents. This was a great mercy conferred on you, and may have proved a special blessing. But it is not Religion. It was the boast of the Jews, that they were the children of Abraham at the time, when John the Baptist called them a "generation of vipers."* It was the boast of Saul, that he was "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews."† at the very time when he was, as he himself afterwards tells us, "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."‡ The same apostle also declares, that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."§ And as it was then, so it is now. All are not real Christians who are called Christians, and have been born of Christian parents.

Further, you are not religious merely because you frequent the church, attend the Lord's supper, and are regular at your devotions. These things are necessary to be done as means of making and keeping you religious, nor can you be truly religious without doing them: but the mere doing of them is not Religion. There were many of the Pharisees, who probably went far beyond you in all these performances. They fasted often; they made long prayers; they were scrupulously exact in all the ceremonies of religious worship: but at the same time they were but hypocrites, "Whited sepulchres," as our Saviour calls them, "beautiful outward, but within full of all uncleanness."‖ Notwithstanding then your attention to these outward parts of religion, you may be no better than the Pharisees were. You may fast, and say your prayers, and come to church, and communicate at the Lord's table, and be but "whited sepulchres" at last. You may do all these things, and yet have no True Religion. Let us enquire,

II. What True Religion is.

If it be not circumcision nor uncircumcision, what is it? St. Paul tells us, It is "*a new creature.*" True religion is not an outward, but an inward thing. It relates not merely to the outer, but to the inner man. It consists not in forms and ceremonies, but in the state and dispo-

* Luke iii. 7, 8. † Phil. iii. 5. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 13. § Rom. ix. 6.
‖ Matt. xxiii. 27.

sitions of the heart. It is not a new name, but a new nature. This is plainly the apostle's meaning. When he says that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," he clearly means to say, that all pretensions to religion, without a great and thorough change wrought in the heart, by the power of God, are nothing, and of no avail. The expression which he uses, implies at once the greatness of the change, as well as the power by which it is wrought.

A new creature, or a new creation, as the word may mean, describes a very great change in a man. It signifies the making him quite a different kind of person from what he was before. It denotes such a change as took place, when God at the creation of the world turned darkness into light, and confusion into order. And this is the very view which St. Paul gives of this change in another place, when he says, that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," that is at the creation of the world, "has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* St. Peter also gives the same account of the matter. He describes the change which true religion makes in a man, by the expression of his being "called out of darkness into a marvellous light."† Now such a change must needs be a very great one. It must be a thorough change of the whole man: a change of the soul, which is a man's self: a change of his mind and judgment, of his views and principles, putting into him new desires and motives, and resolutions, and producing a suitable change of life and conduct.

The greatness of this change shews also the power by which it is wrought. Creation is a divine work. None can create but God, He it was, who said, "Let there be light, and there was light."‡ He alone formed man at first, and He alone can form him again. He alone can shine into the heart, and renew the soul. The change, therefore, which is here described, is a divine work. It is a great inward change wrought by the power of God. This is what availeth. Nothing will avail but this. It is all in all in religion.

Such is the doctrine which the apostle here lays down.

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † 1 Peter ii. 9. ‡ Gen. i. 3.

And is it not a doctrine which the whole Bible equally lays down? Assuredly it is. There is not any one point more clearly taught in Scripture than the absolute necessity, in order to our being truly religious, of such a change as has been here described. In proving this point the only difficulty lies in making choice of proofs: for there are so many, that to bring all would be impossible.

The very rite of circumcision itself taught the necessity of this change. For though it was "a seal of the righteousness of faith,"* yet it was also a sign of the inward renewal and purification of the heart. Thus the Israelites were exhorted by Moses to "circumcise their hearts;" and by the prophet Jeremiah, to "circumcise themselves unto the Lord:"† Thus St. Paul expressly says, that "neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter:" while in another place he calls that very change, of which we speak, "the circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh."‡ These texts shew what circumcision really meant; what was the great truth at which it pointed. And in view of this truth, St. Stephen, when speaking to the unbelieving Jews, calls them, "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in hearts and ears."§

Baptism also, in the Christian church, teaches the same truth. For while this sacrament seals to those who duly partake of it, the remission of their sins, and their adoption into the family of God, it also signifies the necessity of their being cleansed from the pollution of sin, by the sanctifying grace of the Spirit; that so "being buried with Christ by baptism unto death—they should hereafter walk in newness of life."‖ St. Peter gives the same account of this sacrament, when he says, that baptism is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God:"¶ which no man can have, till his heart be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

When Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler, came to our Saviour, and enquired of him concerning the truths, which he was come from God to teach, the necessity of

* Rom. iv. 11. † Deut. x. 16. Jer. iv. 4. ‡ Rom. iv. 28, 29. Col. ii. 11. § Acts vii. 51. ‖ Rom. iv. 4. ¶ 1 Peter iii. 21.

this change was the very first thing which Jesus made known to him. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* That renovation of our nature, which in the text is called a new creature, is here said to be a new birth: and the utter impossibility of being religious without it is directly stated. When Nicodemus expressed his astonishment at this saying, and asked, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" Jesus again insisted on the *necessity* of the change, and shewed more clearly both the nature of the change, and the power by which it was to be wrought. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," except he undergo such a change as the washing with water signifies, and the Spirit of God produces, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And then to leave no doubt as to the truth of these things he explains the reason of this change, shews why a man must be born again, and whence this necessity springs. It springs from the very nature of man in his present fallen state. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man is naturally flesh, that is, corrupt and evil, carnal and sold under sin: and as such he can offer to God no spiritual nor acceptable service. It is that, "which is born of the Spirit, that is spirit." It is only when a man is changed by the Spirit of God, that he can "worship him in spirit and in truth." And therefore, "marvel not that ye must be born again." This is a truth which ought not to raise your wonder: for it is level to your understanding, and capable of the clearest proof.

And hence we may further observe, that all those texts of scripture which set forth the evil nature of man, in fact set forth the necessity of this great change; for while his nature is evil, how can he be truly religious? Before he can be so, he must of necessity have a new nature. If the children of Adam be "begotten in his likeness after his image,"† how can they become the children of God, without being begotten again in the divine image? If "every imagination of the thought of man's heart be only evil continually;" if "the heart be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" if "the heart of the sons of men be full of evil,"‡ (and who can doubt

* John iii. 3. † Gen. v. 3. ‡ Gen. vi. 5. Jer. xvii. 19. Eccles. ix. 3.

that this is the case, for God has said it?) then there must be a new heart, a deep, an entire change in the inner man, or there can be no true religion. If the soul be naturally "dead in trespasses and sins,"* it must be quickened, and made alive unto righteousness. If "the understanding be" naturally "darkened,"† the eyes of the understanding must be opened. If "the carnal," that is, the natural "mind be enmity against God,"‡ there must be a transformation "by the renewing of the mind."§ These are plain consequences, which every one must see and allow; for so long as the soul be dead, the understanding darkened, and the mind alienated from God, how can a man be truly religious, and "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear?"‖ Since "they who are in the flesh," that is in their natural, carnal, unrenewed state, "cannot please God;"¶ and since all men naturally are thus in the flesh, (for as we have seen above in the words of Christ himself, that "what is born of the flesh, is flesh,") it follows of course, that all men, in order to please God, must be born of his Spirit, and become new creatures.

Lastly, the way in which Christians are spoken of in scripture, is an additional proof to the truth before us. They are constantly described as having actually undergone this change. They are said to be "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."** They are spoken of as having been "sometime darkness, but now light in the Lord;" as having been once "dead but now alive again;" as having been "sometime foolish disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," but now "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."†† They are represented as "walking not in the flesh, but in the spirit;" as "renewed in the spirit of their minds;" as being "God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" as having "Christ formed in them."‡‡ They are said to have "put off concerning their former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful

* Ephes. xi. 1. † Ephes. iv. 18. ‡ Rom. viii. 7. § Rom. xii. 2. ‖ Heb. xii. 28. ¶ Rom. viii. 8. ** John i. 13.
†† Ephes. v. 6. Luke xv. 24. Rom. vi. 13. and Titus iii. 3. 5.
‡‡ Rom. viii. 1. Ephes. iv. 23. Ephes. ii. 10. Gal. iv. 19.

lusts, and to have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."* In short to sum up all in one single passage, which of itself fully explains and confirms the doctrine in the text; St. Paul expressly tells the Corinthians, that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away: behold, all things are become new."†

Such, my brethren, is the view which the text gives of True Religion. Here you see what it is, and in what it is placed. Do your notions of it agree with the view thus given? Are you aware, that in order to your becoming truly religious, your heart must be changed and made new by the power and Spirit of God? Are you aware, that True Religion must begin in this change and renewal of the heart? Perhaps you have hitherto imagined, that your own natural dispositions and endeavours, when aided and strengthened by divine grace, would be sufficient for all religious purposes. Perhaps you have imagined, that if the tree were dug about, and improved by cultivation, it would of itself bring forth good fruit. Do you now see that this idea was wrong? Do you now see that a corrupt tree *cannot* bring forth good fruit; that no care and culture can make it do this? Do you now see, that before the tree can be good, and its fruit good, its nature must be changed, and a new graft put into it? It is of the utmost consequence, that you should see this matter aright. For so long as you mistake here, you cannot but go wrong. To think of becoming religious without being "born again," would be the same as to think of walking in the narrow way without having first entered in at the strait gate. Here only it is that we can set forward in the path of eternal life. To think that we can "climb up some other way" is absurd and vain. To attempt it will be ruinous. Let all such thoughts and attempts be laid aside. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Seek of God that renovation of the soul, which is all in all in religion. Pray, earnestly pray, that you may be "born from above, born again of the Spirit;" that so being made "new creatures in Christ Jesus," you may be fitted for serving God acceptably in this world, and for seeing him and dwelling with him for ever in the world to come.

* Ephes. iv. 22. 24. † 2 Cor. v. 17.

SERMON VII.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOWING TO THE FLESH, AND TO THE SPIRIT.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. *Gal.* vi. 7, 8.

WE have here an instance of the plain manner of teaching used in the Holy Scriptures. St. Paul is desirous of shewing the certainty, that holiness in this life will be followed by happiness in the next, and of exposing the folly of those persons, who think that they may spend their lives in sin, and yet go to heaven when they die. He says to them in words which cannot be misunderstood, "be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is well known how much the future crop of the husbandman depends on his improvement of the seed-time. If he should let this season pass by without sowing his seed in the earth; if instead of sowing good seed, he should sow only weeds and thistles, the consequence must be, that when his wiser and more industrious neighbours shall be gathering their fruits into their barns, he will be reaping only shame, vexation, and poverty. Thus it is with our souls. This life is the seed-time for eternity. If this opportunity be once lost, it can never be recovered. If it be turned to a bad use, there will be no preventing the consequence. What a man sows here, he will most certainly reap hereafter. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

These are plain truths! and truths as important as they are plain. They are truths in which we are all infinitely concerned: truths, therefore, which I shall endeavour to fix deeply in our minds. To this end let us consider the two different kinds of husbandry, which men follow with respect to their souls, and the different produce of each, as these things are set before us in the text.

I. We have a description of the man who "soweth to his flesh."

By "his flesh" is meant not merely his body, but that evil and depraved state of the soul, which he inherits from Adam, and brought with him into the world. "For that which is born of the flesh, is flesh."* It is called in scripture by many different names, which plainly shew what it is; as "the carnal mind"—"the body of sin,"—"the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."† Since the tree, however, is best known by its fruits, we shall form a clearer idea of what is meant by "the flesh," when we look at its works. Now these works, says St. Paul, "are manifest." They are such as may be easily seen, and distinctly shew what the flesh is. They are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."‡ More need not be added to explain this point. When such is the dreadful offspring, there can be no doubt as to what the parent must be. If such be the works of the flesh, what the flesh itself must be is clear.

What then is it to *sow* to the flesh? It is to spend our lives in doing these works of the flesh; to lay out our time, our thoughts, and our care in gratifying the vain, sensual, and selfish inclinations which this evil state of the heart naturally and continually puts forth. It is the same as what is elsewhere meant in the sacred writings by "walking after the imaginations of our own heart,"—"by walking after the flesh,"—"minding the things of the flesh,"—"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,"—"obeying sin in the lusts thereof."§ The man who soweth to his flesh is one, of whom it may be truly said, that "God is not in all his thoughts;" that is, to any good or real purpose. He may say that he knows God; but he lives to the world. Self is the great idol which he worships. The questions which are ever first in his mind, are these, "Who will shew me any good?"‖ 'How shall I best take care of my own

* John iii. 3. † Rom. viii. 7. vi. 6. Ephes. iv. 22.
‡ Gal. v. 19—21. § Jer. ix. 14. Rom. viii. 4. 5. Ephes. ii. 3. Rom. vi. 12. ‖ Psalm iv. 6.

ease, interest, reputation, or enjoyment?' These things he follows with the utmost eagerness; and for the sake of them neglects the interests of his soul, and of eternity. He may make perhaps some shew of religion; but he has only the form of it, without the power. He has neither "repentance towards God," nor "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." What godly sorrow, indeed, can he feel for sin, when in his heart he loves it? What daily trust can he place on Christ for pardon and strength, when he knows nothing of his own guilt and weakness? In short, his treasure is upon earth, and where his treasure is there his heart is also. He loves the world, and the things of the world. Here is his portion. Here his affections are set. In the strong language of Scripture, "His God is his belly; his glory is in his shame: he minds earthly things."*

Such is the man who soweth to his flesh. And what will be the fruit of his labours? As he has sown, so shall he reap. He has sown to the flesh, and "of the flesh he shall reap corruption,"—"The pleasures of sin are but for a season." They all perish in the using. They cannot satisfy the soul now, and they leave a dreadful sting behind. Broken health, loathsome diseases, ruined fortunes, disappointed wishes, soured tempers, infamy, and shame, are among those things, which usually come from walking after the flesh. But if a man escape all these evils, (as some who sow to the flesh *do* escape them) if he here live in comfort, and credit, and prosperity, yet this state of things cannot last for ever. He must one day die; and then he will fully reap the corruption for which he has been so long labouring. Then "shall he eat of the fruit of his own way, and be filled with his own devices."† He will then too late find the misery of his choice. All the wicked gratifications, in which he has here placed his happiness, will be no more. A load of unpardoned sin will lie upon his conscience with an intolerable weight; while the body and soul will be miserably tormented in hell with the devil and his angels. This is the corruption which he who sows to the flesh, shall reap of the flesh.

II. We have an account of the man, who "soweth to the spirit."

* Phil. iii. 19. † Prov. i 31.

The spirit is directly contrary to the flesh; for as the flesh is that evil nature, which we have from the first Adam, so the spirit is that new and holy nature, which comes to us from Jesus Christ, who is "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven." It is called *the spirit*, because the Holy Spirit is the author and supporter of it; because it puts into us spiritual desires and affections; and because it enables us to become spiritual worshippers of God, and to give to him, in some measure, a spiritual obedience. There can be no true religion in the soul of man; but what is first begun, and afterward carried on by the Spirit of God. Hence the real Christian is said to be "born again of the Spirit," to be "saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost."* Great and glorious are the consequences of this spiritual birth. For the spirit, like the flesh, is known by its fruits: and its fruits are these, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, righteousness, and truth."†

To sow then to the spirit, is to live under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and in every part of our conduct to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. It is the same with what in other places, is called "walking in the spirit,"—"minding the things of the spirit,"—"yielding the members as instruments of righteousness unto God."‡ The man who "soweth to the spirit," is one, who lives unto God, and serves him with a willing mind. Awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, as a sinner, he has fled to Christ for refuge from the wrath to come; and in the daily use of faith and prayer, trusts to him for pardon, grace, and holiness.—He lives not to the world. He does not indeed leave his station, nor neglect his duty in life. His conscience does not suffer him to be "slothful in business." He attends with diligence to the concerns of his proper calling, as being a part of that work, which the Lord has here given to him to do. But his *heart* is not in the world. None of these things are his treasure. His affections are set on things above, not on things in the earth. His secret prayer is, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me;"§ and in an humble

* John iii. 5. Titus iii. 5 † Gal. v. 22. 23. ‡ Gal. v. 16. Rom. viii. 5. vi. 3. § Psalm iv. 6.

sense of God's love and favour to his soul, he looks for a pleasure far beyond that, which the greatest worldly prosperity could give.—He lives not to himself. He thinks kindly and tenderly of others. He feels for them: prays for them; wishes and seeks their good both in body and soul. He does not push his own interests at their expence; nay, he chooses rather to lose a part, even of his strict right than by insisting on it too strongly to distress his neighbour. In short, he is constantly fighting against the flesh and its lusts; he spares no sin; he practises much self-denial; and labours daily in all things to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Is he called to suffer for conscience sake? He suffers patiently, assured that if he suffer with Christ, he shall also reign with him. Is he afflicted? He murmurs not, knowing that he who "sows in tears, shall reap in joy."*

And what shall he reap? The text tells us "life everlasting." This shall be the fruit of his labour: this the reward of his patient continuance in well-doing. He has "sown to the spirit, and of the spirit he shall reap life everlasting." All the ways of religion are really ways of pleasantness and peace. The truly religious man, that is, he who "sows to the spirit," enjoys even *at present* in no small degree the fruit of his labour. For "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace."* He feels in this world an inward peace and joy, of which they who sow to the flesh, have no knowledge nor conception. He has peace with God. He has the testimony of an approving conscience. He has a hope full of immortality. That holy spirit, under whose guidance he lives, dwells with him as a comforter; puts into him divine consolations; and at times, it may be, fills him even "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—All this, however, is but the beginning, the foretaste, the earnest of that happiness which is laid up for him *hereafter*. Faint at present are our ideas of that glory, which is prepared in heaven for the saints, and which in the text is described by the words, "life everlasting." To raise our thoughts of it however, and to give to us high notions of its greatness and excellence, it is set forth in scripture, as "a kingdom which

* Psalm cxxvi. 5. † Rom. viii. 6.

cannot be moved,"—"a crown of righteousness,"—"an inheritance incorruptible,"—"an exceeding and eternal weight of glory:" in short, a something, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man."† This will be the harvest, which he who now sows to the spirit, shall hereafter reap of the spirit. While those who have sown to the flesh, are reaping corruption, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," he will reign with Christ in glory; and will feel a happiness which knows no end, and which will be growing greater and greater for ever and ever.

Having thus led you to consider the truths set before us in the text, I shall now shortly apply them.

There is one question, my brethren, which I would put in the most serious and earnest manner to every one's heart. 'To which are you sowing, to the flesh or to the spirit? You must be sowing to one of them. To which is it?' Consider how important this question is. If you are now sowing to the flesh, you will reap corruption. Nothing but a timely and a total change of heart can prevent this consequence. Examine then yourselves on this great point. You may be deceiving yourselves as to your real state. But remember the charge in the text, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." You cannot deceive Him. He clearly sees whether you are sowing to the flesh or to the spirit. May He give you grace to see it as clearly!

There are some marks of sowing to the flesh so plain, that the slightest attention will shew them. Are you living in the practice of any known sin, of any one work of the flesh? Are you living in the practice of adultery, or of fornication, or of theft, or of drunkenness, or of reviling, or of injustice, or of any other open breach of the divine law? If you do not daily commit any one of these sins, yet are you ready to commit them whenever the temptation may offer and a suitable opportunity present itself? In this case, my brethren, the matter is as clear as the day. There can be no doubt of your state. You are most assuredly sowing to the flesh. And Oh! what a dreadful harvest will you reap! You may now flatter yourselves that you shall escape at last. But be

* Heb. xii. 28. 2 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Pet. i. 4. 2 Cor. iv. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

not deceived; God is not mocked. He will render to every man according to his works. "Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall enter the kingdom of God."* —"Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil."† As he hath sown so shall he reap.

But there are other marks of sowing to the flesh, which, if not at first sight so plain, yet are no less certain. Do you live unto the world, and not unto God? Covetousness is a sin, which proves a man to be walking after the flesh. And what is covetousness? It is an excessive love of the things of the world. Hence it is expressly said to be "Idolatry;"‡ an idolatrous love of the creature above the Creator; a "setting up of our idols in our heart." Where then is your heart? On what are your affections chiefly fixed? What is that thing, which you follow with the greatest eagerness? Is it money? Is it pleasure? Is it the favour of man? Is it any earthly good? Alas! my brethren, if this be the case, you are sowing to the flesh, and cannot but reap corruption. You are bringing on yourselves disappointment here, and everlasting misery hereafter. You must in this world "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," or be for ever shut out from his presence and favour in the world to come.

Try your state by another mark. Are you living to yourself? Are you indulging any one of the corrupt desires of your own heart? Remember, he that sows to the spirit, must practise self-denial. Perhaps on some occasions, when your worldly good is concerned, you *do* deny yourself. You check your anger, when a mild behaviour will best suit your purpose. You keep your tongue from evil-speaking, when you are in the presence of those whom you wish to please. But this is not the self-denial of the Christian. Do you mortify your evil inclinations from a regard to God, and to the good of your soul? Do you mortify not some few, but all of them? Is there no lust which you secretly spare? While you keep from what you call great sins, do you not give way to wrath, to malice, to envy, to a peevish disposition, to a contentious spirit, to a false or an uncharitable tongue? These

* 1 Cor. vi. 9. † Rom. ii. 9. ‡ Col. iii. 5.

are all works of the flesh: and he who allows himself to live in the practice of one of them, is sowing to the flesh as really, as he who lives in habits of adultery, of drunkenness, or of theft.

This may be deemed a hard saying. But it becomes the minister of the gospel to be plain in a matter, wherein the souls of his hearers are at stake. He might flatter and deceive them, but who would be the better for such a conduct? Let it be granted that to mortify the flesh is indeed a work most painful to our nature. Does not this very thing prove that it is a necessary work? If to root out our lusts be so difficult a task, this very circumstance shews how deeply rooted our lusts are in our hearts. And is it not better to cut off the offending member, "than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire?"*

Do you ask then, what course you should take? There is but one, which you can take with safety; "Sow to the Spirit." Repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Pray to God, that you may be "born again of the Spirit;" that by the teaching of the Spirit you may be brought to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified; that you may live under the guidance of the Spirit; through the Spirit may mortify the deeds of the body; and in every part of your conduct may abound in the fruits of the Spirit. "So shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Thus "sowing to the Spirit, you shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

SERMON VIII.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—1 *Tim.* i. 15.

THE prophet Isaiah complained, "Who hath believed our report?" And the ministers of the gospel have too much

* Matt. xviii. 18.

cause for making a like complaint. Their report, like his, is but little attended to and believed, though it has every thing in itself, which can deserve attention and demand belief. It is in fact the very report contained in the text, of which St. Paul declares that it is "A faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation." In discoursing on this passage, let us consider,

I. What this Report, or Saying is.

II. What is the Account here given of it.

I. The Saying is this, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." For the full understanding of these words there are several particulars, which need enquiry.

1. Who is Jesus Christ? In the words of his apostle St. Peter we reply, that he is "The Son of the living God:"* his Son, not by creation as the angels are his sons: his Son, not by adoption as men become his sons: but his Son by generation. As he himself tells us, "The only begotten Son of God," "which is in the bosom of the Father."† He is "the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God:" equal to and "one with the Father:" "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person:"‡ "God of God; light of light; very God of very God."—He is the Creator and Upholder of all things: for "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."§ He is "Lord of lords and King of kings,"—"the First and the Last,"—"the Beginning and the Ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." "Who is over all, God blessed for ever."‖ Such is Jesus Christ.

2. What is meant by his coming into the world? These words cannot be spoken of him as God. As God he could not be said to come into the world: for as God,

* Matt. xvi. 16. † John iii. 18. i. 18. ‡ John i. 1. x. 38. Heb. i. 3. § John i. 3. Col. i. 16, 17. ‖ Rev. xix. 16. i. 8. 11. Rom. ix. 5.

he had always been in the world: "Heaven was his throne, and the earth was his footstool." He was here and every where present. Whereas to come into the world denotes a more immediate entering into it. The expression seems to signify his appearing in the world his making himself known to it in some different way, from what he had before done. And this was precisely the case. For he was made man, and appeared in human nature, and became partaker of flesh and blood. As St. Paul expresses it, "God was manifest in the flesh;" or as St. John says, "the Son of God was manifested;" and again, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth."* This, then, is what is meant by Jesus Christ's *coming into the world*. "Being in the form of God,—he yet took on him the form of a servant."† He laid aside his glory, and came down from heaven, and was "found in fashion as a man." He humbled himself to be "made of a woman;"‡ to be born in a stable; to be wrapped in swaddling clothes; to be laid in a manger. He submitted to share our infirmities, to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," to be made subject to sickness, pain and death. What a depth of humiliation was this! The Creator condescending to become a creature! The Almighty in great humility visiting the works of his hands! The Lord of life and glory sojourning and suffering in a house of clay! We enquire then,

3. Why did he thus come? The coming of so wonderful a person, in so extraordinary a manner, must surely have been for some very important end. It could not have been for a slight, a trifling purpose, that the eternal Son of God should thus have humbled himself, and have come into the world. No: it was for the greatest the most gracious, the most glorious purpose; a purpose which fills heaven itself with wonder and admiration, and will for ever fill it with joy and praise. It was "to save sinners," the guilty children of fallen Adam: who had corrupted their way before the Lord, had broken his laws, had rebelled against his government, and were still

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. 1 John iii. 8. John i. 14. † Phil. ii. 6, 7.
‡ Gal. vi. 4.

abusing, to the vilest purposes, those gifts, which in his mercy and long suffering he was still continuing to them. Yet these he came to save. Could it have been ever thought, that such would be the purpose of his coming? Had we been told that the Son of the Most High was about to visit the world which he had made—a world thus "lying in wickedness,"* and daily provoking his righteous indignation—what could we have thought would have been the purpose of his coming, but to punish and destroy the world? With what other object should he come, but as the messenger of wrath, the minister of vengeance, to execute judgment on his enemies, and to pour on his rebellious creatures deserved destruction? But Oh! unthought of goodness! astonishing mercy! "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."† Jesus Christ came into the world—not to condemn, not to punish, not to destroy—but to save. His message was a message of love. His ministry was a ministry of mercy. He "came to seek and to save that which was lost;"‡ to "save sinners;" to "call sinners to repentance;"§ to purchase salvation for them; to propose to them terms, by which they might be saved.

We ask then,

4. What is meant by being saved? What is the salvation, which Jesus brings to sinners? To be saved is to be delivered from danger. Sinners are in the greatest danger. Having broken God's law, they are exposed to the curse of that law. Having corrupted themselves, destroyed God's image in their souls, and become the slaves of sin and Satan, they are in danger of "the wrath to come." There is a wrath to come. Already "it is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."‖ Now it "abideth"¶ on sinners. Hereafter it will come upon them to the uttermost: "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."** This is the end of sin; the end, which sinners have brought upon themselves, and which of themselves they cannot avoid. But Jesus opens to them a way of escape. He delivers from

* 1 John v. 9. † John iii. 17. ‡ Luke xix. 10. § Matt. ix. 13.
‖ Rom. i. 18. ¶ John ii. 36. ** Rom. ii. 9.

the wrath to come."* He offers to redeem them from this curse of the law; to pluck them as brands out of the fire; to save them from the dreadful consequences of sin, from the malice of Satan, from the prison of hell, from "the bitter pains of eternal death."†

Great however as this deliverance is, it is but a *part* of that salvation, which Jesus provides for sinners. To him it was but a small thing to bring them out of misery. He purposed also to bring them to happiness: yea, to much greater happiness than that, which they had lost by sin. It did not satisfy his mighty love merely to rescue them from hell. He opened to them the kingdom of heaven. He designed not only to take away their guilt, and procure the pardon of their sins; but to restore them to a state of favour with God; to place them again among his children; to break the chains of sin, with which they were tied and bound; to renew their souls to the divine image and likeness: and so having fitted them for dwelling with himself in glory, to bestow on them the gift of eternal life.—This is his salvation. Hence it is called an "eternal salvation;"—the salvation which is in Jesus Christ with eternal glory."‡ Hence to be *saved* in the scriptural meaning of the word, signifies to be delivered from every thing, which is evil and dreadful, and to be put in possession of every thing, which is good and happy. It describes the greatest possible change in the state of a sinner, which words can express, or thoughts conceive. Represent to your minds those deep and dark abodes, where unpardoned sinners, together with the devil and his angels, are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Then lift up your eyes to heavenly places. There see the saints in light, for ever set free from sickness, grief, and death, rejoicing with joy unspeakable in the favour and presence of the Lord, bearing his image, and beholding his glory. And thus see what is meant by being saved; what is that salvation, which Jesus brings to sinners. Upon the whole then, our report is this: 'That there is salvation for sinners through Jesus Christ: that the Son of God came down from heaven to be their Saviour; that by Him a way is opened into heaven for those, who must otherwise have miserably perished in their sins.'

* 1 Thess. i. 10. † Burial Service. ‡ Hebrews v. 9. 2 Tim. ii. 10.

Let us enquire,

II. What is the Account here given of this Report.

Is it a *true* Report? This is the first thing to be asked: for every thing depends on this. If it be not true, it is worth nothing. In answer to this question, St. Paul assures us, that it is a *faithful* saying: one, which is undoubtedly true; one, on which we may most certainly depend; a saying, entitled to full credit. In fact, it is a report, which has the same claim to our belief with the Bible itself. For it runs through the whole Bible, and is to be found in almost every part of it. It cannot, therefore be disbelieved, without disbelieving the Bible itself: while every proof, which confirms the truth of the scripture, confirms also the truth of this saying in the text. Consider then what manifold and abundant testimony is given. Look at the many wonderful miracles, by which God at different times has confirmed the truth of his word. Look at the long train of prophecies, many of which have been exactly fulfilled, many of which are at this very day fulfilling. By all these witnesses God declares, that the saying in the text is a *faithful* saying. Look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By what stronger proof could God have shewn that Jesus Christ was come into the world to save sinners, than by raising him from the dead to complete that salvation? Attend to another kind of proof; to the experience of thousands, of millions, who have found this saying "a faithful saying:" who, coming to Jesus Christ for salvation, have felt the blessings of it; have found their hearts changed and their souls delivered from the power of sin; have been begotten again unto a lively hope; and even in this present life have enjoyed the foretaste and earnest of eternal salvation. These are a cloud of witnesses to the truth before us. God grant! that the number of them may yet be greatly increased! Grant that more and more of us may be enabled from the heart to say, 'I *know* that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners; for he has saved me. He has set me free from the chains of sin. He has delivered me from this present evil world. He has written his law in my mind, and shed abroad his love in my heart. He has taught me to seek and to follow that which is good, and has given to me that peace

which passeth all understanding.' This is to have the witness in ourselves. Let us seek to have this inward witness abiding in our hearts: and we shall then know *indeed* that the saying in the text is a faithful saying. But further,

The Apostle, in speaking of this saying, describes it as being not only a *faithful* saying, but one "*worthy of all acceptation.*" This may point, in the first place, at the *way* in which it should be received. It is worthy of all acceptation, worthy of being received with all possible gratitude and joy. Its vast importance claims for it this reception. How *ought* the tidings of salvation to be received by perishing sinners? When they hear of the Son of God coming down from heaven to save them, must they not be filled with deep and admiring thoughts of his loving-kindness and compassion? Can they be told of this stupendous instance of his love, and not cry out with the pious Psalmist, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?"* When they think of the blessings, which this Saviour brings to them; of "the wrath to come," from which he offers to deliver them; of the eternal glory, to which he designs to raise them; must they not deem the tidings in the text to be "glad tidings of great joy?" Can they listen to them without being ready to cry out with the Prophet, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon the afflicted."†

But the words in the text point not only at the *way* in which this report should be received, but at the *persons* by whom it should be received. It is worthy of *all* acceptation, of *general* of *universal* acceptation. It is worthy of *all* men to be received. For all men are sinners; and stand in need of being saved; and can be saved in no other way, than in that pointed out in the text. All then are concerned in this report. All *must* accept it, or perish. On the contrary all *may* accept it and live. The salvation offered in the gospel, is offered to all. Jesus Christ came to save sinners; *all* sinners who are willing to be saved by Him. He shuts out none, but those who by unbelief shut out themselves. He commanded his

* Psalm viii. 4. † Isaiah xlix. 13.

gospel to be preached "to *every* creature." He invites "*all*, who labour and are heavy laden to come to him for rest:" and he promises that "those who come to him, he will in no wise cast out."*

In applying this subject, my brethren, let me put you in remembrance, that "to you are the words of this salvation sent." This report, which has come into all the world, has reached your ears. "Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners:" to save *you;* to deliver you from the punishment and misery which your sins have deserved, and to bring you to everlasting life and glory. How does the report affect you? How do you receive it? Do you count it worthy of all acceptation? Do you receive it with gratitude and joy? Or are these tidings of salvation heard by you with indifference? Do they stir up in you no lively feelings, no grateful sense of the mercy vouchsafed to you? Does every trifling, worldly thing lay hold of your mind, and interest your heart, while the Saying in the text is listened to without pleasure or interest? If this last be the case, whence does it arise? From what cause can it happen, that you are thus unmoved at these important tidings? It is because you do not feel the importance of them: because you are alive to the things of the body and of the world, but really dead to the concerns of the soul and of eternity. Were you sick, you would listen with joy to the report of a remedy. Were you in prison, you would hear with transport of a deliverance. Were you in distress, you would welcome with delight the tidings of relief. Because in all these instances you would *feel* your wants. You would *feel* the misery of sickness, of imprisonment, or of poverty. But the misery of sin you feel not: therefore it is, that you are not suitably touched with the glorious tidings, that "Christ Jesus is come into the world to save sinners." O may it not be always thus with you! May you be awakened to a sense of your spiritual danger! May you know indeed that you are sinners, and feel the need, which you have of being saved?

To such as already do feel this need: whose consciences are alarmed; whose eyes are opened to see their danger; whose souls are anxiously searching for some way of de-

* Mark xvi. 15. Matt. xi. 28. John vi. 37.

liverance from the wrath to come: to such persons how acceptable must be the saying in the text! It discovers to them the very thing, which they are wishing to find. It points out to them that salvation, which they are anxiously seeking. It makes known to them a Saviour, mighty to save, sufficient for all their wants, able and willing to save them to the uttermost. My brethren, if such be your case, take the comfort of these glorious tidings. They are intended for your comfort. Can you scarcely believe the report of mercy so rich, so free, so seasonable? It is a faithful saying. "He is faithful, who has promised." Come unto this Saviour, and you shall find rest unto your souls. Your sins, though many, shall be forgiven. "Be they red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You shall be delivered from the wrath to come. You shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.

SERMON IX.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

And as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.—*John* iii. 14, 15.

IT is of great importance to us to have a right knowledge of the way of salvation. For without knowing the way, how can we be saved by it? Whatever, then, helps to explain this matter, should be highly prized by us. Now in the text we have an explanation of it, to which no objection can be made, and than which no better can be given: for it is the one, of which Jesus Christ himself made use. He was instructing Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel; when, among other things, he says, that "as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

In these words our Saviour, who here calls himself

"the Son of Man," plainly declares two things; first, that there was a necessity for his being lifted up; and secondly, that his being lifted up would in some respects resemble the lifting up of the Serpent by Moses in the Wilderness. It shall be my endeavour in this discourse,

I. To explain these two things declared by our Lord.

II. To shew what particulars we may gather from them concerning the way of salvation by the gospel.

I. In explaining the two things here declared by our Lord, I shall take them in the order in which they are stated in the text, and shall consider,

1. In what respects the lifting up of Christ resembled the lifting up of the Serpent in the Wilderness.

We have an account of the remarkable event here mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Numbers. The people of Israel, by their unbelief and murmuring, had displeased God, and provoked him to manifest his wrath. As a judgment on their sin, he sent among them fiery serpents, which bit the people; and no cure for the bite being found, great numbers died. But as it had been on other occasions, so it was now. In their trouble they sought the Lord. Terrified at the judgment, which was fallen on them, they came to Moses, confessed their guilt, and besought him to intercede for them with God. "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee. Pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." Moses, at their request, besought the Lord, and the Lord heard his prayer. In this instance, however, as it often happens in others, He did not grant the very thing, which was asked; nor give relief in the exact way, which the people had pointed out. He did not immediately take away the serpents from them: but he made known a way, in which those, who were bitten, might be cured: at the same time, that it would put their faith and obedience to a trial. The way was this. He commanded Moses to make a Serpent of brass, and having set it on a high pole, to raise it up in the midst of the camp, that it might be seen by the whole congregation. To this Serpent, thus lifted up, the people were directed to look; while it was promised, that every one, who was bitten, should on looking at it be cured. His deadly wound

should be healed, and he should live. And thus it came to pass. As many as believed and obeyed the direction, were instantly healed. "If a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the Serpent of Brass, he lived." Such is a short account of the remarkable event mentioned in the text.

Now the lifting up of Christ resembled this lifting up of the Serpent, in that he was really lifted up in like manner. *As* the Serpent was lifted up, "*even so*" was the Son of Man lifted up: for he was lifted up upon the cross. When nailed to the accursed tree, and there set forth as a spectacle to the whole world, he aptly resembled the Serpent of Brass fastened to the pole, and raised up in sight of the whole congregation. And it is in this same way, that Christ speaks of his death in another place, when he says, and "I, if I *be lifted up* from the earth, will draw all men unto me," when it is expressly added, "this he said, signifying what death he should die."*

But this is not the only respect in which the resemblance, of which we speak, is to be found. There is another still more important one to be noticed. The lifting up of Christ on the cross resembled the lifting up of the Serpent by Moses *in the end and purpose*, for which it was done. Why was the Serpent of Brass lifted up? That the Israelites by looking to it might be healed of their deadly wounds. "*Even so*" Christ was lifted up, that sinners by looking to him may be saved. Sinners are in a far worse state, than the Israelites were, when bitten by the fiery serpents. For the bite of the serpent brought with it only the death of the body; but sin brings with it also the death of the soul. Sin is a dreadful disease which infects and corrupts the whole man. The sinner "has no health in him;" and is in danger of dying eternally: nay if left to himself he *must* die eternally; for his disease is naturally incurable. He is no more able to find a cure for his sin, than the Israelite was to heal the serpent's bite. But as in the one case, so in the other, God has furnished a remedy. As he suffered not the Israelites to perish without opening to them a way of escape: so neither does he suffer sinners to be lost without making known to them a way of

* John, xii. 32, 33.

salvation. "As the Serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, *even so*," in a like manner, and with a like design, "was the Son of Man lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life."

We see then in what respects these two events resemble each other. We consider,

2. What *necessity* there was that the Son of Man should thus be lifted up.

Christ himself declares that there was a necessity. He says, "the Son of Man *must* be lifted up." Whence did this necessity arise?

In the first place, without being lifted up he could not fulfil the scriptures concerning himself. They all foretold his sufferings and death. The types, the shadows, the sacrifices of the law, the predictions of the prophets, all agreed in saying, that Christ should be lifted up. "They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."* That Christ had this reason in his mind, when he declared the necessity of his being crucified, we can have little doubt. For he expressly reminded the apostles, "how it was *written* of the Son of Man, that he *must* suffer many things, and be set at nought:" while on another occasion he gives it as his reason for not praying to his Father to save him from suffering; "but how then shall the *scriptures* be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"† Thus again after he was risen from the dead, having appeared unto two of his disciples, and reproved them "for their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had written, "he asks," *ought* not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" And then to shew what he meant by the word *ought*, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."‡ Without fulfilling these things, he could not be the person, of whom Moses and the prophets had spoken: and since they with one voice had said, that Christ should suffer, it was *necessary* in order to his being the Christ, that he should suffer. In this sense he *must* be lifted up.

But there is another and a far deeper sense, in which these words are to be understood. There was a still stronger necessity for the Son of man being "lifted up."

* Luke xix. 31. † Mark ix. 12. Matt. xxvi. 54 ‡ Luke xxiv. 26, 27.

His sufferings and death were necessary to the accomplishment of that great and gracious work, which he had come from heaven to perform. This work was to save sinners. Now consider what stands in the way of their salvation. They have broken God's holy law, and have incurred the awful punishment which follows disobedience. Though God may be disposed to pity and spare them: yet his holiness demands their destruction. Before he can shew mercy towards them, some satisfaction must be made to his infinite justice: some sacrifice must be found of sufficient value to atone for their guilt and glorify his law. But how shall such a satisfaction be made? Sinners could never make it. Where shall such a sacrifice be found? Sinners could never find it. What they, however, could never have done for themselves, the Son of God offered to do for them. He offered in his own person to make satisfaction for them, by giving himself as a sacrifice for their sins. To this end he humbled himself to become the Son of Man, that so in the likeness of sinful flesh he might suffer and die for sinners. Here then we again see the necesstiy mentioned in the text. The Son of Man *must* be lifted up. He must hang, and bleed, and die on the cross, because there only it was, that he could procure salvation for sinners; because there only it was, even on the cross, that by pouring out his soul unto death, he could make the full oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, without which no one sin could ever be remitted: because there only it was, even on the cross, that by his precious bloodshedding, he could purchase the gift of the Holy Ghost, without which no one sinner could ever be renewed and sanctified: because there only it was, even on the cross, that he could triumph over the powers of darkness, could destroy death, and "him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil," and could open a new and living way into the kingdom of Heaven.

Having thus explained the two things declared by our Lord in the text I shall endeavour,

II. To shew what particulars we may gather from them concerning the way of salvation by the gospel.

1. We may observe, that in order to be saved, we must look to him and be saved. Nor can we be saved without

looking to Him. It is plain, that a remedy against an evil can be of no avail, unless it be used. A medicine will not lessen the violence of a disorder, unless it be taken. Food cannot satisfy the cravings of hunger, unless it be eaten. Thus it was with the remedy provided for the wounded Israelites. It was not enough that the Serpent of Brass was lifted up. The remedy thus provided must be used and applied, and, as it were, brought home by every one to his own case. Every Israelite, who would be healed, must *look* on the Serpent. He must *turn his eyes* upon it, in the hope and expectation of a cure.—And thus it is with the salvation provided for sinners. It is not enough that it has been provided. It is not enough that Christ has been crucified; and has thereby offered a sufficient sacrifice for sin. Sinners must secure to themselves an interest in that sacrifice. They must make the blessings purchased by it their own. And how can they do this? By *looking* to the Son of man thus lifted up: by *turning their eyes* upon the cross, in the hope and expectation of being saved by it from sin. This is the direction which Christ has expressly given for applying to ourselves the benefits of his death; "*look unto me, and be ye saved!*"* But how are we to understand this direction? What is meant by *looking* unto Jesus Christ, and by *turning our eyes* upon the cross! It is plain that sinners cannot look on Jesus Christ in the same manner as the Israelites looked on the Serpent of Brass, that is, with their bodily eyes. This is impossible. It is the eye of the soul, which is here meant. The looking spoken of is the *looking of the heart*. When the soul is turned towards Jesus Christ, casting all its hope of being saved on the sacrifice, which he has made for sin, and humbly praying to be made partaker of the benefits purchased by that sacrifice, then may it be truly said, to *look* to Jesus Christ. And what in fact is this, but that very *believing* on Christ, that *faith* in Him, which the scriptures so constantly set forth, as the only way of procuring an interest in his precious blood-shedding? "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." By Him all that *believe* are

* Isaiah xlv. 22.

justified from all things." "He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth not on* the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." "By grace are ye saved through *faith*."* To which passages of scripture let us add only the words of the text, "the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

"We may observe that this way of saving sinners by faith in Jesus Christ, is a way altogether of God's providing. To have set up the brazen serpent for the purpose of healing the wounds of the people, was a way of giving relief, which would never have entered into the heart of man: a way, which, if it had entered into his heart, he could never have made effectual. It was altogether of God. The wisdom of God planned the way and prescribed the means. His power alone made those means successful. Thus it is with the salvation of the Gospel. No man could ever have planned it. It was far above out of his thoughts. It was utterly beyond his power to have accomplished it. God alone could have planned a way, and provided a sacrifice. He alone could say, what satisfaction he required for our sins, and in what way He could be reconciled to his guilty creatures. This way he has been pleased in mercy to make known to us. He has told us, that it is the way of faith in Jesus Christ, and that "whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." What then have we to do, my brethren, but thankfully to use the remedy thus provided for us? It is a remedy indeed, which may seem strange to our natural ideas; a remedy, which we may be tempted to look upon as weak, and insufficient, and unlikely to succeed. But might not the Israelites on the same ground have objected to the remedy provided for them? Might not they have called it weak, and insufficient, and unlikely to succeed, and have given this as a reason for not making trial of it? Yet we have seen in their case how false and impious such reasonings would have been. Be assured, that they will be equally false and impious in our case. In answer to every objection of this kind, let us remember, that the way of salvation

* Acts xvi. 31. xiii. 39. John iii. 36. Ephes. ii. 8.

by faith in Jesus Christ is the way of God's providing. It is his own appointment for the saving of our souls. Thoroughly persuaded of his wisdom, power, and truth, let us rely with full assurance on his word. Is Christ "the Lamb of God;" the Lamb whom God himself has provided for a burnt offering? Let us by faith *behold* this Lamb. Has "God set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins?" Let us look to Him, and be saved.

The necessity of doing this will more strongly appear from observing,

3. That this way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is the *only* way. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,"* but the Name of Jesus Christ. There is no way of coming unto the Father; but by Jesus Christ.† What then must become of those, who build not on this foundation, who trust not in this name, who come not by this way? Consider, what would have become of the wounded Israelites, had they refused to make use of the remedy provided for them? When bidden to look at the Brazen Serpent for a cure, had they said, 'No: we will try some other means of procuring relief. We will go to the physicians. We will have recourse to medicines. We will see, if we cannot heal ourselves:' what must have been the consequence? They would certainly have died. For the remedy, which they would have refused to try, was the *only* one, which could heal their wound. Such then exactly is the case with the salvation provided by the Gospel. It is the only salvation from sin. Those who from pride, or perverseness, or negligence refuse to have recourse to it, must perish. "He, that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."‡

4. We may observe that this way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is *free and open to all*. None are shut out from it, but those who shut out themselves. It is a remedy provided for all, who are willing to make use of it. Moses was directed to tell the Israelites, when he set

* 1 Cor. iii. 2. Acts iv. 12. † John xiv. 6. ‡ 1 John v. 12.

up the Brazen Serpent, that "*every one*, who was bitten, when he looked upon it should live." No exceptions were made. All were invited to share the blessing. And all who sought a cure in the appointed way, obtained it. No stage, no state of the disorder, made any difference. "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten *any* man, when he beheld the Serpent of Brass, he lived." Thus it is with the salvation of the Gospel. It is expressly said in the text, "the Son of man shall be lifted up that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." Take notice of that word "whosoever." It includes all persons of all descriptions. Every child of Adam, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, young or old, *whosoever* he may be, yet if he believe on Jesus Christ, he shall live. Let him look with a penitent sorrow, and a believing trust to this great sacrifice for the sin of the world, and he "shall not perish, but shall have eternal life."

What comfortable words, what tidings of great joy, are these to all, who know and feel themselves to be sinners! How ought every heart among us to leap for joy; for we are all sinners. Sin has given to every one of us a dreadful wound, which no art, nor wisdom, nor labour of our own can heal. Jesus Christ alone can heal it: and it is only by looking to him, that we can obtain a cure. O then, look to him for health and salvation! Though you may fear that you are afar off from him; though you can, as it were, but dimly see him: though your faith be weak, your ignorance great, your hope wavering, yet still *look* to Him. Make him your all in all. See him crucified, bleeding, dying for your sins; and while you grieve with a godly sorrow for your transgressions, still hope in his mercy, and trust with humble confidence to the sufficiency of his sacrifice in your behalf.

On the other hand, my brethren, remember that this faith of the Gospel is a sanctifying faith. It is a faith, which makes holy all who have it. You cannot believe in Christ, and yet remain unholy. The salvation of the Gospel is a salvation *from* sin. Now a man cannot be saved *from* sin while he serves it, and lives in it. You would not have said, that the Israelite was cured of the serpent's bite, while the poison still raged in his veins.

Neither are you saved from sin, if sin still reign in you. Be not deceived. Are you obeying sin in any of the lusts thereof? In this case, you are no true believer in Christ. You are not *really* looking to him. You may have heard of him; but you have never seen him by faith. He is lifted up, but you behold him not. Your hope at present is not the hope of the Gospel. It is not the hope by which we are saved; for "every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure."*

SERMON X.

JESUS CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION.

And being made perfect, He became the Author of Eternal Salvation, unto all them that obey Him.—*Hebrews* v. 9.

IF there be one truth more clearly laid down in the Bible than another, it is this—that men cannot draw nigh to God but through a Mediator, that is, through the means of some person, who may stand between them and God, and may make up the breach between them. The whole Jewish religion taught this truth in the plainest manner. The appointment and office of the High-Priest especially shewed it forth. He was the appointed Mediator between God and the people. By Him the sacrifices, which they brought, were offered up. It was his office to go alone into the Most Holy place, which represented Heaven, bearing the blood of the sacrifices in behalf of the people. It was his office to burn incense every morning and evening in the Holy place, by which act his prayers and intercessions for the people were signified. It was his office to bless the congregation in the name of the Lord. But there was one thing, which shewed that in discharging all these parts of his office, he was only a *typical* Mediator, that is, that he only re-

* 1 John iii. 3.

presented some other person, who was the true and real Mediator. It was this. The High-Priest, while he offered up sacrifices for the sins of the people, offered them up also for himself, for his own sins. It was therefore plain, that there could be no real power in his mediation, seeing that he himself also stood in need of a mediator, by whom he might draw near to God, and be himself accepted. Need we be told, my brethren, that this *one*, *only*, *true* Mediator, whom the High-Priest represented, to whom all the ceremonies of the Jewish religion pointed, was Jesus Christ. He is the real, great High-Priest, of the Church; through whom alone sinners can draw nigh to God, and find acceptance with him. It is this High-Priest, of whom the Apostle speaks in the text. In the former part of the chapter he had been shewing what the priest's office was, and how greatly the priesthood of Christ excelled that of Aaron, when he comes to this conclusion, " being made perfect, he became the Author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him." When the Apostle speaks of Christ's being *made perfect*, he means as to his office. He was fully fitted for the discharge of it. Unlike to the High-Priests under the Law, who were only his representatives, he was in every point fitted to become a sufficient Mediator. He needed not, as they needed, to offer sacrifices for himself, for he had no sin which wanted an atonement. He did not offer, as they offered, " the same sacrifices continually;" but he offered one sacrifice for sin, even the sacrifice of himself. He did not enter, as they entered, merely " into the Holy Places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Thus he " became the Author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him."

In discoursing further on this passage I shall consider three particulars, which it offers to our notice.

I. The office, which Christ has undertaken.

II. His fitness for discharging it.

III. The persons, to whom the benefit of it reaches.

I. The Office of Christ. He is " the Author of Eternal salvation." Man is born for eternity. Every man, who is born into the world, has an immortal soul; which will be happy or miserable for ever. Death puts an end

to his natural life, but not to his being. There is a state of bliss or torment, in which after this life he must be fixed for ever. "The wicked shall be turned into hell: and "the righteous shall go into life eternal."*—But who among us, my brethren, can hope to go into life eternal? We are none of us righteous. Nay, the Scriptures tell us, that there is not a righteous man upon earth: "there is none righteous, no not one?"† We are all sinners. We were born in sin. We have lived in sin. We have committed many sins: and one sin is enough to ruin the soul for ever. "The wages of sin is death:"‡ an everlasting separation from God and happiness.—Such in fact is the state of all men from the time of Adam's Fall. They have immortal souls; but being by nature and by practice sinners, they have lost all title to heaven, all fitness for it; they serve their lusts, obey the Devil, and are condemned to everlasting punishment, as children of wrath and enemies to God. Desperate however as our case appears to be, there is a remedy proposed. Jesus Christ has undertaken to deliver us out of this miserable condition. He has undertaken to give back to us a title to heaven and a fitness for it. He has undertaken to save us from the dominion of sin, from the power of the Devil, from the pains of hell. He has undertaken to make us the children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. This is His Office, of which we are here speaking, and in respect of which he is called "the Author of Eternal Salvation." This great and glorious change from a state of wrath and misery to a state of grace and happiness, which may justly be called "Eternal Salvation," is the work of Jesus Christ. He begins it. He carries it on. He completes it. He came down from heaven that he might procure this salvation for us: for "he came into the world that he might save sinners." If he had not come, there could have been no salvation for us. Therefore it is said, "God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is *in his Son.*"—"Through Him we have access by one spirit unto the Father."—"No man cometh unto the Father, but by him."—He is "the good Shepherd," who, speaking of his sheep, says "*I give* unto them eter-

† Psalm ix. 17. Matt. xxv. 46. † Rom. iii. 10. ‡ Rom. vi. 23.

nal life."* But it is especially as our High-Priest that we are led in the text to look to Jesus Christ. This office he bears for us. As our High-Priest he has undertaken to offer a sufficient sacrifice for our sins, and to make effectual intercession in our behalf; and thus fully to discharge the office of Mediator between God and us.—Let us next consider.

II. His Fitness for discharging this Office.

However willingly Christ might have undertaken to become our High Priest and Mediator with the Father, yet if He had not been fully fitted to discharge his office, his undertaking it would have profited us nothing. It is on his *fitness* for being our High Priest that our trust in him is laid. And, blessed be God! we have full proof of his sufficiency for this purpose. It was in consequence of his being *made perfect*, perfectly fitted for his office, that He " became the Author of Eternal Salvation."

1. He was appointed of God to be our High Priest. This Appointment was absolutely necessary to make Him duly fitted for the discharge of his office. Without it we could have had no certainty, that God would accept his mediation. No persons under the Jewish law could take to themselves the Priesthood, and thus become typical Mediators. The High Priest was especially appointed by God: by which we are taught, that no High Priest could avail unless appointed by him. " No man taketh that honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten Thee:" as he saith also in another place, " Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."† Thus the Prophet Isaiah, speaking in the person of Christ says, " The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek :"‡ which *anointing* afterwards actually took place, when the Heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove came down upon the head of Jesus, and thus, as it were, consecrated Him to the office of the Priesthood; while a voice from Heaven proclaimed the Father's assent to the

* John v. 13. Ephes. ii. 18. John xiv. 6. John x. 28.
† Hebrews v. 4—6. Psalm ii. 7.—cx. 4. ‡ Isaiah lxi. 1.

consecration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

2. He had wherewith to offer for the sins of the people. This formed a necessary part of the Priest's office. The Priests under the law daily offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. There was, however, nothing in their sacrifices which could have any real value. The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin; "for *then*," asks the apostle, "would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins." The very repetition of the sacrifices shewed that they could "never make the comers thereunto perfect."† But it is not so with our Great High Priest. "He by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."‡ He had an available sacrifice to offer, the sacrifice of himself. He shed his own blood to make atonement for sinners; that blood which "cleanseth from all sin." The sufferings of the Son of God in human nature formed an acceptable, a sufficient sacrifice. They shewed forth the heinousness of sin, the justice and holiness of God, the honour which he put on his law, his rich mercy, and infinite wisdom. With the sacrifice, therefore, of Jesus, God was well pleased. It was to Him "a sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savour;"§ because by this sacrifice the divine perfections were honoured and glorified. When Christ, therefore, undertook to be our High Priest, He did not undertake more than he was able to perform. He was able "to make reconciliation for iniquity; to offer such a sacrifice for sin, as would take it away; and to deliver sinners from the punishment due to them, by taking it upon himself. Thus was "the Captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering."||

3. Christ is able effectually to intercede for his people. Intercession or praying in behalf of the people, was another important part of the Priest's office. Thus Christ is not only the propitiation for our sins, but "our advocate," that is to say, our intercessor, "with the Father."¶ Christ, though He died once for sins, could not be holden of death. Having by death fully satisfied the demands

* Matt. iii. 17. † Hebrews x. 1, 2. ‡ Hebrews x. 14.
§ Ephes. v. 2. || Hebrews ii. 10. ¶ 1 John ii. 3.

of the law, He speedily rose from the dead, and went up into Heaven, there to become our intercessor. And there are two grounds, on which we may look with confidence to Him in this character. First, in that "He *ever liveth* to make intercession for us."* His Priesthood is an unchangeable Priesthood. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."† Secondly, in that he has something available to plead in our behalf, even the infinite merits of his own sufferings. This is a plea which will always prevail for every sinner, in whose favour it is urged.—And thus Christ is fully qualified to intercede for his people.

Christ is thoroughly and personally acquainted with the wants and the weaknesses of those, whose cause he has undertaken. The High Priest under the Law was taken from among men, that thus he might "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity."‡ In this respect also Christ is fitted for his important office. Though he was the Most High God, yet he humbled himself, and took upon him our flesh, with all its feelings, weakness, and infirmities, sin alone excepted. He has thus shewn himself as possessing an intimate, an experimental knowledge of our nature. Having been "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," he manifestly knows how to compassionate the afflicted. Having himself suffered in the flesh, he manifestly knows how to pity and relieve those that suffer. Were he only God, we might perhaps be tempted to think that he did not enter into our feelings, and so might distrust his compassion. But being also man, having lived, and suffered, and died as man, we may rely on Him as "a merciful and faithful High Priest," who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."—Therefore in this point also he is *made perfect*.

Lastly, He is not only a Priest, but a King. So was Melchisedec, after whose order Christ is a Priest. He was at once "King of Salem, and Priest of the most High God."§ Thus Christ in his office of Mediator joins the two offices of Priest and King. He is "a Priest

* Hebrews vii. 25. † Hebrews xiii. 8. ‡ Hebrews v. 2.
§ Gen. xiv. 18.

upon his throne."* And it is this circumstance, which makes his mediation complete and perfect. While he has every thing fitting and requisite for the discharge of the Priesthood, he has also "all power in heaven and in earth." "The government is upon his shoulders."† Whatever happens in nature and in providence is under his control. The gift of the spirit itself is at His disposal. He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" and "shall reign" as Mediator, "till he hath put all enemies under his feet."‡—Thus, in every respect being made perfect, he is "become the Author of Eternal Salvation."

Let us consider,

III. The persons, to whom the benefit of his mediation will reach.

Christ "died for all." He "tasted death for every man."§ His mediation is sufficient for all. All are invited to share the benefits of it. But all will not be the better for it. Why so? Because all will not comply with the only condition, on which the benefits can reach to them. Christ is "the Author of Eternal Salvation to all them," but to them only "*who obey him.*" This obedience has respect to his whole mediatorial office. Those, who would be saved by him, must obey him as their Priest, and as their King. As their Priest they must humbly trust in his sacrifice and intercession, and place all their spiritual concerns in his hands. As their King they must submit to his government, and keep his commandments. They must not only "call him, Lord! Lord! but must do the things which he says." It might be plainly shewn, that they who do not thus obey Christ, *cannot* be partakers of that Eternal Salvation, of which He is the Author. But it is enough for our present purpose to shew, that they *will not* partake of them. We are expressly told, that those "who obey not the Gospel;" that is, who do not receive Jesus Christ as the propitiation for their sins, and their advocate with the Father, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power:"|| while such as refuse to have Christ for their king, he himself

* Zech. vi. 13. † Isaiah ix. 6. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 25. § 2 Cor. v. 14. Heb. ii. 9. || 2 Thess. i. 8. 9.

thus decisively condemns, "Those mihe enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me." *

Having thus considered the three things set before us in the text, let us now apply them to ourselves.

My brethren, you have every one of you an immortal soul; a soul, which must live for ever: a soul, which throughout eternity must be happy or miserable, must feel dreadful suffering, or enjoy inconceivable bliss. Can any enquiry then be of such importance to you as this, What will become of your soul? Are you aware of the state, into which sin has brought your soul? Do you know, do you consider, that by sin you have lost the happiness of heaven, and have incurred the misery of hell? It matters not in this respect, whether your sins be less or greater, be fewer or more, than those of others. They who have committed the greatest sins, will receive the greatest punishment. But all sin is committed against a good and holy God, and is "exceeding sinful." You must compare yourselves not with one another, but with the law of God; which brings in every one of you as guilty, and therefore condemns every one of you to the punishment prepared for the enemies of God.—One way of escape, however, is open for you. You may yet be saved from the wrath to come. You may be delivered from the punishment of your sins; nay more, you may yet enter into heaven, and enjoy everlasting happiness. There is One, who, as you have seen, has undertaken your cause: One, who, beholding your lost condition, and being filled with love and pity for you, has taken upon himself to become your Mediator, and to procure your salvation: One, who, as you have also seen, is fully fitted for the office, which he has undertaken; who has been appointed to that office by God himself; who, "being God and man in one Christ," has made an all-sufficient sacrifice for your sins by himself suffering in your stead: One, who is now entered into heaven, and there ever liveth to make intercession for you: One, who knows your infirmities, and is touched with tender compassion for them: One, who having all power is "able to save to the uttermost, those who come unto God by him."

* Luke xix. 17.

Such is your state. Such is the Mediator set before you. What course, my brethren, will you take? Would you save your precious soul, would you escape eternal misery, what can avail you but thankfully to accept the offers of this Mediator? What can avail you but to put your soul into the care of One, who is so able to take charge of it?—Recollect then what you must do in order to be saved by his mediation. You must *obey Him*. You must give to Him *the first place* in your heart. He must *reign* within you. On no other condition will he be your Saviour, the Author *to you* of Eternal Salvation. You must become his willing servants, his obedient subjects. And is there any thing hard, any thing unreasonable in this condition? "His commandments" in themselves "are not grievous." On the contrary, they are good and pleasant, and tend to the happiness of all who keep them. His yoke is an easy yoke. His service in fact is perfect freedom. Some master you must serve. If you serve not Christ, you are serving sin, the world, and the Devil. What will they do for you? Will they be the authors of Eternal Salvation? No; they will sink you in eternal ruin. This will be the wages of their service.—Besides, have any of these masters such a right to your obedience as Christ has? Have they made you out of nothing? Do they continue to you life and breath and every comfort which you enjoy? Far otherwise. For all these blessings, for every thing which you have or hope for, you are indebted to Christ. He created. He preserves you. Nay more, he has redeemed you. He has bought you with a price. He has given a ransom for you, even his own precious blood, which was shed to purchase you to be to him a peculiar treasure. How then can you for a moment justify disobedience to him? Not to obey him is the foulest ingratitude, the basest unkindness, the most abominable wickedness, no less than the most unreasonable conduct, the most desperate folly.

May these considerations come home to the hearts of all. May the recollection of those sufferings, by which our blessed Redeemer was perfected for his glorious office; of our sins, which caused those sufferings; of his love, which led him for our sakes to undergo them; powerfully constrain us all to yield ourselves to him, as

our rightful Master, our Teacher, Priest, and King; to devote ourselves for ever to his service; to join ourselves to him, "in an everlasting covenant, which shall not be forgotten!"

SERMON XI.

THE OFFIÇES AND GIFTS OF JESUS CHRIST.

Him hath God exalted with His right Hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins.
Acts v. 31.

ALL our religion must depend on our knowledge of Jesus Christ; of what he is in himself, and of what he has done for us. Without this knowledge we can have no just sense of our duties, nor any good hope of salvation. This knowledge, then, must be highly valued, and diligently sought by us. And in this view the words of the text are particularly deserving our attention. For they were spoken by St. Peter before the Jewish council, and contain a statement of those particulars, which he and the other apostles taught concerning Jesus Christ. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." In discoursing on this passage I purpose,

I. To consider the Truths, which it teaches us concern- Jesus Christ.

II. To shew what Use we should make of these Truths.

I. The general Truth, which we are here taught concerning Jesus Christ, in his *Exaltation*. That same Jesus, whom the Jews with wicked hands had crucified and slain, "Him hath God *exalted* with his right hand." The Father, "having raised him from the dead has set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."* But in this general Truth we are led more particularly to consider two things.

1. The Offices, to which Jesus is exalted.

* Ephes. i. 20.

2. The Gifts, which he is exalted to bestow.

1. Of these *Offices* the first is that of *Prince*, which is the same with ruler or king. The Jews rejected the *authority* of Jesus. They would not have him to *reign* over them. They accused him as an enemy to Cæsar; for making himself a King. And in contempt of taking this title to himself, there was written over his cross, "*Jesus the King of the Jews*." But Him hath God exalted to be a *King*. Vain were the opposition and malice of his enemies. "The heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed." "But he that sitteth in the heavens laughed. The Lord had them in derision." "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."* The exaltation of Jesus to the mediatorial throne was the covenanted reward of his humiliation and sufferings. For this "joy, that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame; and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross: *wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." Having "made him both Lord and Christ," He "hath put all things under his feet; hath "given him to be head over all things to the church;" "hath committed all judgment unto him;" hath placed him "upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." †

But Jesus is not only a king. He is exalted to be a *Saviour*, as well as a prince. In this character also the Jews refused to receive him. They were looking for a worldly Saviour, who should set them free from the yoke of their worldly enemies. But Jesus is a *spiritual* Saviour, who delivers not only Jews, but Gentiles also, from "the wrath to come," from the yoke of sin and Satan. He was called *Jesus*, because he "should save his people from their sins." For this purpose he came into the

* Psalm ii. 1, 2, 4, 6. † Heb. xii. 2. Philip. ii. 8, 9, 10. Acts ii. 36. 1 Cor. xv. 27. Ephes. i. 22. Isaiah ix. 7.

world, and was made man. For this purpose he died the cruel and shameful death on the cross. For this purpose he rose from the dead, and "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him."* From the first entrance of sin into the world God had promised a *spiritual* Saviour, who should "bruise the Serpent's head." This promise he gradually made clearer by types and prophecies. Till at length, "when the fulness of the time was come, he sent forth his son, made of a woman;" and having "set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," "exalted him with his right hand to be a Saviour."† To this Saviour he bids us look. In this Saviour he bids us trust. This Saviour he commands us to hear. He assures us, that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Jesus Christ. He assures us that, looking unto Jesus with a penitent and believing heart, we shall be saved. "Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone elect, precious: and he that believeth on him, shall not be confounded." This is the will of the Father, "that every one, which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life."‡

Such are the Offices to which Jesus is exalted. We consider,

2. The *Gifts*, which he is exalted to bestow.

These Gifts are two, Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour *for to give Repentance* to Israel and *Forgiveness of Sins*."

Repentance, in the language of Scripture, is a change of heart, producing a change of conduct. The man, who truly repents, is one who has far different views of sin from those, which he once had. He once thought lightly of it. But he now sees it to be evil, as bringing ruin on his soul: nay more, he sees it to be "exceeding sinful," as committed against a good and holy God. And this view of it fills him with penitent sorrow, shame, and self-abhorrence. He no longer tries or wishes to hide his sins from God. He confesses them with unfeigned humiliation; he con-

* 1 Peter iii. 22. † Gal. iv. 4. Rom. iii. 25. ‡ 1 Peter ii. 6. John vi. 40.

demns himself on account of them; he hates and forsakes them. His language is, "Behold I am vile." "I abhor myself; and I repent in dust and ashes."* Such were the feelings of the publican, when standing afar off, he would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."† Such were the feelings of the Corinthians, whose repentance St. Paul describes in these expressive words: "For behold, this self same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."‡

This penitent state of mind then, is one of those *Gifts* which Jesus is exalted to bestow. By his Spirit he convinces the soul of sin; takes away "the heart of stone," the hard, unfeeling, impenitent heart; and produces that "godly sorrow," which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Thus on the day of Pentecost he *gave* repentance to three thousand sinners at once, when at the preaching of St. Peter they "were *pricked in their heart*, and said unto him and the rest of the apostles, men, and brethren, what shall we do?"§ Thus also Jesus *gave* repentance to the persecuting Paul, when "trembling and astonished he cried," in words, which shewed the penitent feelings of his heart, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"‖

But Jesus *gives* not repentance only, but also *forgiveness of sins*. Sin brings punishment. The offender against God's law, like the offender against man's law, becomes subject to the penalty denounced against transgression. The sinner can do nothing to escape this penalty. He cannot undo his sin; he cannot atone for his offence. Nothing remains to him "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."**—But the offender may be pardoned. By an act of mercy his guilt may be done away. The prisoner may be set free; and thus may

* Job xl. 4. xlii. 6. † Luke xviii. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. vii. 11.
§ Acts ii. 37. ‖ Acts ix. 6. ** Heb. x. 27.

be restored to liberty, to favour, and to his forfeited privileges.

Such is forgiveness of sins; and such also is the gift which Jesus is exalted to bestow. He has purchased it for us with his own blood. By the one sacrifice of himself once offered, he made a perfect satisfaction for the sins of the world. In virtue of this sacrifice he "had power on earth to forgive sins."† He has the same power in heaven. He pardons sinners. He remits the penalty due to their offences. He says to the prisoner, "Go forth;" to the criminal under condemnation, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."‡

Such are the Truths, which the text teaches us concerning Jesus Christ. I go on,

II. To shew what Use we should make of the Truths.

1. Let us hence learn, what should be our conduct towards Jesus Christ.

Has God exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour? Let us receive him in these offices. Let *us* exalt him also. As our King let us obey and honour him. Let us not merely bend the knee, nor bow the head at his name. Let us not merely call him "Lord, Lord," and render to him a formal, lifeless service. But let us submit our hearts to him; bring in subjection to his authority our wills, our tempers, our affections; and worship him in spirit and in truth.—As a Saviour let us believe and trust in him. Let us look to him only for salvation. Let us count all our own works as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us rely solely on his merits for pardon, holiness, and eternal life. By this conduct only can we please God, or save our souls: to refuse to have Christ for *our King* is direct rebellion against the majesty of Heaven. To reject him as *our Saviour* is to seal our own destruction: for "there is salvation in no other."

Nor let us foolishly and wickedly attempt to separate these offices of Jesus Christ; to receive him in one, and to reject him in the other. Thus it is that numbers dishonour Christ, and ruin their souls.

Some profess to take him for their King, but do not accept him for their Saviour. They call themselves by

† Matt. ix. 26. ‡ Isaiah xlix. 9. Matt. ix. 2.

his name; say that they are his subjects; and pretend to be governed by his laws; but on *what foundation* are they building their hopes of acceptance with God? On Jesus alone? No. On something in themselves. On their own works, merits or services. They dream that they shall be saved, because their tempers are good, or their lives free from gross offences; because they are punctual in their dealings, or kind to their neighbours; because they are not so bad as many others: or because they attend on the ordinances of religion. These things are their Saviours. On these things *they* depend for salvation. But, my brethren, let me urge it on you as a truth never to be forgotten, that Christ is the only Saviour. Whatever may be that foundation, on which you attempt to build, if it be not Christ, it is worthless and unsound. Neither can you join any other foundation with him. If asked to give a reason of the hope, which is in you, the language of your lips, the language of your heart, must be "Christ is all."

But there are others, who act a contrary part; who call Jesus Lord, but "in works deny him;" who take him for their Saviour, but do not obey him as their King. Gladly would they be saved by him from punishment, but they cast his words behind them. They submit not to his holy law. Some earthly idol, some fleshly lust, some unmortified sin is suffered to reign in their heart. Look at their lives; in their dealings with others they betray as selfish and worldly a spirit, as the most ungodly characters.—Go into their company. Their conversation is censorious and uncharitable.—Follow them into their families. Here they indulge ungovernable tempers: neglect the religious education of their children; and employ their servants without any regard to their spiritual instruction. Are they in affliction? Discontented and repining they murmer at the will of God; and at the best, submit only because they *must*. Are they in prosperity? They shew nothing of that meekness, moderation, humility, self denial, and munificence, which Christianity requires. In short, Christ has not the heart. He does not rule within; and where this is the case, all professions of faith in him are vain and empty. If he be not a King, he is not a Saviour. He is "the

Author of Eternal Salvation to all them," but to them only, "who obey him." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

2. We may learn from the text, what things are necessary to our salvation. Is Jesus exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins? These we may be assured are the very things, of which we stand in need. If they were not necessary to us, Jesus would not have been exalted to bestow them. Let us not suppose, then, that we can be saved without them. Unless our sins be pardoned, we can never be admitted into heaven. Unless our hearts be changed and made new, we can never be fitted for that holy and glorious place. Nor let us suppose that these things can ever be separated. The gifts which Jesus bestows, like the offices to which he is exalted, cannot be parted from each other. The scriptures constantly represent them as inseparably joined together.

On the one hand, the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness is strongly enforced. John, the forerunner of Christ, "preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin," saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."† When Jesus himself came, he proclaimed the same truth, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."‡ In the charge which he gave to his apostles after he was risen from the dead, he told them "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."§ And accordingly it is to this effect that we find his apostles afterwards preaching, "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," "Repent ye, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out."||

On the other hand, forgiveness of sins is no less constantly described as closely following repentance. All the texts already brought, imply this point: others more directly prove it. "The Lord looketh upon man; and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy." "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to

* Heb. v. 9. Rom. viii. 9. † Mark i. 4. Matt. iii. 2. ‡ Matt. i. 15. § Luke xxiv. 47. || Acts ii. 30. iii. 19.

cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* No sooner did David repent of his sin, saying, "I have sinned against the Lord," than the prophet was commissioned to say unto him, "The Lord hath also put away thy sin."† No sooner did God see Ephraim bemoaning himself on account of his transgressions, than he said, "I will surely have mercy upon him."‡

These passages plainly prove the point in question. In reading them, however let us not fall into a mistake. While we see that repentance and forgiveness of sin are closly joined together, let us not suppose that our sins wilt be forgiven, *because* we repent of them. Let us not suppose that repentance is the prevailing, the procuring, the meritorious cause of our forgiveness. This would be to put repentance in the place of Christ. It is His blood alone, "through which we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."§ If our sins be pardoned, it is *because* Christ died for us. His death alone is the price our of pardon; and by faith alone do we obtain an interest in this blessing. None, however, but the truly penitent are fitted to receive and value it. None therefore but the truly penitent will ever really partake of it. Hence springs the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness. Hence Christ has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish:"‖ while He, who has wrought in us a godly sorrow for our sins, will plead his own merits in our behalf; and will not suffer us to perish under the unpardoned guilt of those transgressions, which he himself has taught us to hate and to forsake.

3. We may further learn from the text, how these needful blessings are to be procured. Jesus Christ is exalted to bestow them. Repentance and forgiveness are his Gifts: Gifts, which he offers to all, and which he is able and willing to bestow on all. What glad tidings of great joy are these to a world of perishing sinners! With what transports of gratitude should we receive and welcome them! What consolation do they furnish to every trembling and afflicted soul, which feels its own unworthiness, and is weighed down with the thoughts of its own depravity and guilt. The first and most earnest wish of

* John i. 9. † 2 Sam. xii. 13. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 20. § Ephes. i. 7.
‖ Luke xiii. 3, 5.

a soul thus humbled and distressed is this, 'Would that my sins were pardoned! "Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." I owe ten thousand talents. I have nothing to pay. O that there might be forgiveness with God for me!' Know then that there is forgiveness with God for you. Pardon, that pardon, which you so greatly need, and for which you so anxiously long, is the very Gift, which Jesus offers to you. He has purchased it for you. He is exalted to bestow it. He is ready freely to bestow it on *you*. He cries, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins." "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more."* I am exalted to pardon you. I offer to you forgiveness "without money and without price." Receive the gift. "Be not faithless, but believing." Go in peace.'

What is your answer? 'I am not fit for so great a mercy. They are the *Penitent*, to whom these promises are made. I am not penitent. My heart is hard and I cannot soften it. I cannot feel my iniquities; I cannot weep for them; I cannot hate them, as I ought to do. What interest then can I have in the promises of pardon? How can I hope that my sins will be forgiven?'

Attend once more to the words of the text. Jesus is exalted to *give* repentance. Repentance is his gift, no less than pardon. That same Jesus, who bestows forgiveness, bestows repentance also. What you are not able to do for yourselves, he can do for you. He can soften the hard heart. He can smite the rock, and make the waters of contrition flow. He can "bless you by turning you from your iniquities." Give up the idea then of softening your own heart. Lay aside the vain hope of making yourself penitent. Seek repentance as a gift. Pray to Jesus to bestow it on you; "to grant to you repentance unto life." Beseech him, in the words of our church, to "give you repentance and his Holy Spirit;" to "create and make in you new and contrite hearts;" to "take away from you all hardness of heart." He will hear your

* Matt. ii. 28. Isaiah xliv. 2. Heb. viii. 12.

prayers. As a Prince and a Saviour, he will bring deliverance. "A new heart will he give you and a new spirit will he put within you; and he will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and he will give you a heart of flesh. And he will put his spirit within you and cause you to walk in his statutes; and you shall keep his judgments and do them."*

SERMON XII.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IN CHANGING THE HEARTS AND LIVES OF MEN.

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.—1 *Cor.* vi. 11.

THE Gospel of Christ is the instrument, which God has appointed for the conversion of sinners; and its wonderful efficacy, in turning men "from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God," proves its divine appointment. What a striking instance of this kind is that mentioned by St. Paul in the text! He had been speaking of the certain destruction which awaiteth the ungodly. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Such, however, adds the apostle, speaking to the members of the Corinthian church, "Such were some of you."—Some of them had formerly been persons of this character. They had lived in the practice of the most abominable sins, and had been subject to all the guilt, and shame, and punishment, which these sins bring with them. Was *such* however, *still* their condition? Were they *still* persons of this character? No. They had undergone a

* Ezek. xxxiv. 26, 27.

most great, and a most glorious change. They were now "washed; they were sanctified; they were justified."—They were become new creatures; in character, in conduct, the very reverse of what they had formerly been. Their guilt and pollution were taken away: "they were *washed*."—They were no longer under condemnation: no longer at enmity with God, and children of wrath. A blessed reconciliation had taken place. They were *justified*, pardoned, received into favour, and become heirs of eternal life.—They were no longer living in the practice of wickedness. They had renounced the hidden things of darkness. They now hated those sins, in which they had once delighted. They were *sanctified*. They were made partakers of a new and holy nature. They loved God and holiness; and already possessed in their souls, a foretaste of heavenly happiness. By what means, by what instrument had this wonderful change been brought about? By the Gospel of Christ. The blood of the Lord Jesus was the fountain, in which they had been washed. "*In his name*," by faith in his name, "they were justified; *by his Spirit* they were sanctified." From first to last, He was the sole, the blessed author of the glorious change, which had taken place in their state. Consider well what they *were*; idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, revilers, walking in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind; sunk in the most abominable wickedness; following all uncleanness with greediness. Then consider what they *are*, delivered from this lost, this miserable, this degraded state, *washed, justified, sanctified*. Behold this astonishing change; behold what Jesus by his name, by his spirit, has done; and acknowledge the *power* of the Gospel. Where shall we find any other instrument, which can do such a work as this? What reason then have we earnestly to pray, that the Lord, as in former times, would make known his power among us; and cause this his appointed instrument to be mighty in operation, washing the unclean, justifying the ungodly, and sanctifying the unholy.

In farther discoursing on the words of the text, I purpose to draw from them two important Truths, which I shall separately explain and apply.

I. That the Gospel of Christ is abundantly sufficient for saving the greatest sinners.

II. That a man's Religion is to be tried, not by his *past*, but by his *present* character, not by what he *was*, but by what he *is*.

I. I am to shew that the Gospel of Christ is abundantly sufficient for saving the greatest sinners.

The salvation of a sinner contains two things, his deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin; and his recovery to the divine image and likeness; in other words, his justification and his sanctification. Let either of these blessings be wanting, and his salvation would be unfinished. Though his sins should be pardoned, yet so long as his heart remained filthy and corrupt, he could never see God. Let his soul be renewed in righteousness, and true holiness, yet without forgiveness of sins, such a renewal would profit him nothing. In the one case he would still need a title for entering into heavenly glory; in the other he would still want a fitness for enjoying heavenly happiness. But in both these respects, the salvation of the Gospel is complete. It is abundantly sufficient for saving sinners, both from the punishment and from the power of sin. It undertakes to procure for them the forgiveness of their sins, and the renewal of their hearts; and it undertakes to do this for *all* sinners, who wish to have it done for them: for the *greatest* sinners; for those, whose guilt is most highly aggravated, for those, whose evil habits are most deeply rooted. Nor does it undertake to do more, than it is able to perform. The instance of the Corinthians in the text, fully explains and confirms this truth. Surely if there could have been any sinners, whose case the remedy provided in the Gospel would not reach, these Corinthians would have been the persons. If any sins could utterly shut out a man from the divine mercy, *their* sins would have shut *them* out. For what sins could be greater? Idolatry, adultery, uncleanness, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, and extortion; these were the horrid, the abominable practices, in which they had lived. But had even these sins shut them out from mercy: Had the Gospel been found insufficient for recovering them out of this their lost and guilty state? No. We have seen, that they

were washed, that they were sanctified, that they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. They stand forth as decisive proofs of the power and sufficiency of the Gospel for saving the greatest sinners. Indeed the whole Bible proclaims the same truth. The blessed Jesus, the eternal Son of the Most High, came into the world on purpose that he might save sinners; sinners of every rank and description, without any exception or reserve. He commanded that "remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations:"* and to shew in the clearest manner, how free and full his salvation was, he especially directed that the first offers of it should be made to the Jews, to those very persons, who with wicked hands had crucified and slain him. We are expressly told that the "blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin;" that "he is able to save them to *the uttermost*, that come unto God by him;" that, he "will *in no wise* cast out any that come to him;" that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."† His invitations are addressed to all without any restrictions: "Ho, *every one* that thirsteth come ye to the waters." "If *any man* thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "*Whosoever will*, let him take of the waters of life freely."‡

In short so rich, so full, so vast is his mercy, that none are shut out from a share in it, but those, who by their obstinacy and impenitence shut out themselves. Do you require any further witnesses to this truth? Look at many of the persons, celebrated in the Scripture for their piety and holiness, and see what their former characters had been. What had the Ephesian converts been before they received the Gospel? They had "been dead in trespasses and sins," "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," "without God in the world.§ What had Matthew and Zaccheus been before their conversion? Publicans, persons usually distinguished for their covetousness, their rapacity, and their extortion. What had Onesimus been? A run-away, dishonest servant. What had St. Paul himself been? "A blasphemer, a perse-

* Luke xxiv. 47. † 1 John i. 7. Heb. vii. 25. John vi. 37. Rom. x. 13.
‡ Isaiah lv. 1. John vii. 37. Rev. xxii. 17.
§ Ephes. ii. 1, 3, 12.

cutor," nay as he declared "the chief of sinners."* But for all these the Gospel proved sufficient.—For the thief upon the cross; for the jailer at Philippi; for thousands among the wicked Jews; for tens of thousands among the idolatrous Gentiles, it proved sufficient. "In the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God they were washed, they were justified, they were sanctified." They were saved from condemnation, and created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

Let us then apply the truth thus firmly established, for correcting an error, into which men are apt to fall, respecting the condition of others. When we see a person notoriously evil and profligate, how apt are we to speak of him, as being in a state which is past recovery. 'Nothing, (we cry) can reclaim such an abandoned sinner.' His condition is hopeless and desperate: and every attempt to reform him will be useless.' Such language most frequently springs from pride and self sufficiency; but it is always joined with great ignorance of a man's own heart, and of the rich provision made in the Gospel for perishing sinners. Let none of us then, my brethren, make use of such language: for the opinion contained in it, is most unfounded. We can have no reason to pronounce the state of any man to be desperate, for there is no sinner, whom Jesus Christ cannot convert and save. Had we seen these Corinthian converts in the days of their ignorance and sin, we might perhaps have deemed their condition to be hopeless, and might have blamed every endeavour to make them better, as misplaced and utterly useless. But in so doing we should clearly have done wrong. Despair not then of any persons, however lost they may appear to be. But pray for them, "if, peradventure, God will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth." Remember that the same grace, which was sufficient for the Corinthians, will be sufficient for them. They, who are farthest off may yet be brought nigh. Those, who are last, may be first.

Let this subject be applied also for consolation and encouragement, to convinced and humbled sinners. Such often stand greatly in need of consolation. They are filled with anxious fears for their safety. The recollection of

* 1 Tim. i. 13, 15.

their sins weighs down their spirits; and makes them ready to conclude that their state is hopeless. 'Were our offences fewer in number, were they less in degree, we might hope for pardon. Had we not lived so long in sin, had we not run such lengths in wickedness, we might lay aside our fears. But guilty as we are, what hope can we have of mercy? Can God forgive such great offenders? Can he cleanse and soften a heart so foul and hard as ours?' Yes, my brethren. He can cleanse and soften the foulest, the hardest heart. Suppose that your former state has been as bad as that of the Corinthians. Suppose that, like them, you have "followed all uncleanness with greediness," yet He who saved them can save you. He who washed, who justified, who sanctified them, can wash, can justify, can sanctify you. Distrust not then his power. There is mercy with him for every penitent offender. Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus; and your sins though many, though great, shall be blotted out. Pray for the spirit of our God; and your soul, though "all as an unclean thing," shall be purified. Listen to this gracious and encouraging promise. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."*

But while the truth before us speaks comfort to the penitent sinner, it leaves the impenitent without excuse. Is the Gospel of Christ abundantly sufficient for saving the greatest sinners? May all, even the chief of sinners, be pardoned and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God? Then why do any of you continue in the practice of sin? Why, when you may be freed from its guilt and power do you continue in a state of wrath and wretched slavery? Is it not plain, that "you love darkness rather than light;" that you prefer slavery to freedom; that you "*will not* come to

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.

Christ, that you may have life?" The grace and mercy of God set forth in the Gospel, and the plentiful and wonderful salvation there provided, strikingly expose, and greatly increase the wickedness of those, who still continue the slaves of lust, of pride, of anger, of sensual appetite, of violent and uncharitable tempers. Had these Corinthians persisted in giving way to their evil and depraved inclinations, *after* the grace of God had come among them, they would have been far more guilty and inexcusable, than even they had formerly been. Tremble then for yourselves, my brethren, if not made better by the mercy of the Gospel, you still cleave to your iniquities; and thus too plainly shew, that you receive the grace of God in vain.

II. I go on to explain and apply the other Truth to be drawn from the text; namely that a man's religion is to be tried not by his *past*, but by his *present* character, not by what he *was* but by what he *is*.

This Truth may be easily explained and stands in need of little proof.—True religion makes a real change in a man. It "transforms him by the renewing of his mind." It makes all things new within him; puts into his heart new desires, new hopes, new motives; and leads him to walk in newness of life. Would we then know whether a man be truly religious or not, we must enquire into the proofs of his conversion; we must see, whether he have undergone this change or not.—Is he a new creature? Are old things passed away? Are all things become new? What is his *present* conduct? Does it agree with his profession of religion? To judge of his religion by what his character was before he became religious, would be foolish and unjust. Would it not be trifling to say that these Corinthians were not true converts to Christianity, because *formerly*, before their conversion, they had been idolaters, adulterers, or drunkards? Whatever they *were*, their character as sound Christians is built on solid grounds. The point is this. Have they, or have they not, forsaken their former evil practices? If they have renounced the hidden things of darkness: if they be now "walking as children of light:" if their lives, and tempers, and conversation now shew, that they are sanctified by the Spirit of our God: if they have these

marks of true Christianity; you surely, would not attempt to prove, that they are not Christians, even if in the days of their ignorance, they had been more abandoned than they actually were.

Let this truth then correct a practice, which is too general in the world. When a man begins to take up a serious profession of religion, nothing is more common, than to hear all the irregularities and sins of his former life charged against him as clear proofs of his present hypocrisy. "What pretensions can this man make to be religious? Have we not known him from his youth? Do we not remember such and such parts of his conduct? Are we not well acquainted with what his manner of life has been?"—But, my brethren, what are these charges to the purpose? What do they prove, except the ignorance of those who bring them, and the secret enmity which they indulge against religion? Allow that the man *has been* as bad, as you describe him to have been (probably if asked, he will acknowledge himself to have been far worse,) yet the question is, not what he *was*, but what he *is:* not what you *remember* him *to have been* but what you now *see* him *to be.* Do you not now see him leading a new life? Do you not now see him leaving off those practices, which he once followed; forsaking those companions, which he once loved; denying and subduing those tempers, which he once indulged? While you have these proofs of the sincerity of his religious profession, cease to expose your own folly and wickedness by reproaching him with sins, which he committed before he had taken up that profession.—True Christian charity would lead you to hope, to believe the best of every one: would lead you even to make *great* allowances wherever circumstances will admit; and to adopt on every occasion, the most favourable opinion.

But while we apply this Truth for correcting our wrong judgment of others, let us also use it for forming a right judgment of ourselves. What we were by nature, the Scriptures plainly tell us, and experience as plainly proves. We were born in sin, and were children of wrath. If by the grace of God we have been kept from running into many of those excesses, of which the Corinthians were guilty, yet still, in some shape or other we

have served sin, and have obeyed it in some of the lusts thereof. By nature we were far off from God; we followed the devices and desires of our own evil heart: and had pleasure in unrighteousness. This was our state, for it is naturally the state of all. But the question, which we are concerned to answer is this, *Is it still our state?* Are we still children of wrath? Are we still, "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures?" Are we still the servants of sin? Or have we been made free from sin? Have we experienced that real, inward change, which true religion will certainly produce? Let us remember, that there may be much seeming outward alteration, where there is no real inward change. There may be a seeming forsaking of sin, when in fact there is only a turning from one sin to another. There may be a much more diligent attendance on religious duties, especially public ones, than formerly, while the heart remains unmoved—Let us beware then of concluding on slight grounds, that we are washed, that we are justified, that we are sanctified. Is there such a clear, an abiding, an entire change wrought in our hearts, and influencing our lives, that the apostle could say of us, as he said of the Romans, "God be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin:"* that is "God be thanked, that though ye *were* such, ye *are* such no longer:" "but," as he adds, "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, which was delivered you?" My brethren, never think yourselves safe, till it be thus with you. Never conclude that you are "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus," till you have good reason to hope from the increasing experience of your own hearts, that you are "sanctified also by the spirit of our God."

Are you arrived at this hope? Let it be your great concern to shew forth in your lives the reality and the greatness of the change, which you have undergone Recollect the Apostle's admonition to the Ephesians; "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; *walk as children of light.*"† "Let your profiting appear unto all men." Whatever may have been the irregularities and sins of your former life, in the days of your ignorance, so labour *now* to adorn your christian

* Rom. vi. 17. † Ephes. v. 8.

profession, "that they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ: and having no evil thing to say of you,"* may be forced to own that you are indeed "washed, justified, sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

SERMON XIII.

SANCTIFICATION THROUGH THE WORD.

Sanctify them through thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth.
John xvii. 17.

SANCTIFICATION, in its first and plain meaning, signifies a *separation* from common and ordinary uses to higher and sacred purposes. Thus, under the law of Moses, the sabbath, the temple, the vessels employed in the sacrifices, were said to be *sanctified;* that is, they were set apart for holy purposes. Thus the priest under the old dispensation, and the ministers of the Gospel under the new, are by their office *sanctified*, or peculiarly appointed and separated to the worship of God. And thus christians also, being by baptism dedicated to the service of God, and by profession his people, are *sanctified*. But this sanctification is, after all, only outward. There is another sanctification which is inward, the sanctification of the heart, which consists in a separation from sin; in a renewal of the soul to holiness; in a recovery of our nature from the depravity brought on us by the fall of our first parents; and, in a restoration to the divine image and likeness.

It is in *this* sanctification, in this separation from sin, that our fitness lies, for entering into heavenly glory; "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord:"† and doubtless, it is this sanctification, of which our Lord speaks in the text. He prays, that all who believe in Him may be *sanctified;* may be delivered from the love, the power, the pollution of sin; may be renewed in the spirit of their minds: and so may be "made meet for

* 1 Peter iii. 16. ‡ Hebrews xii. 14.

partaking the inheritance of the saints in light." "Sanctify them through thy Truth: Thy word is Truth."

In discoursing on these words, I propose,

I. To state some particulars respecting the work of Sanctification.

II. To consider the great Instrument, or outward mean here mentioned, by which this work is carried on.

I. We may observe of Sanctification,

1. That it is a *divine* work.

It is not in man to renew and sanctify his own soul. He might as well attempt to create a world, as to create his own heart anew. "The preparations of the heart are from the Lord."* Our Saviour plainly signifies this truth in the text: for he does not tell his disciples to sanctify themselves, but He prays to his Father to sanctify them. This work of sanctification indeed, in the scheme of our redemption, is peculiarly undertaken by the Holy Ghost. That Divine Person is the agent, who begins and finishes this glorious work. He is the Author of our Sanctification. He first pours holy desires and resolutions into our hearts. "He "quickens us when dead," and puts into us a new principle of spiritual life. Hence we are said to be born again of the spirit." By fresh and continual supplies of his grace, he preserves the divine life, which he at first gave. Having sown the seed of holiness in the soul, he waters and nourishes it, causes it to shoot and grow, and enables it in due time to bring forth its proper fruits. Of ourselves we are as utterly unable to go forward in the divine life, as we were at first to set out in it. It is "the Spirit who helpeth our infirmities."† Of ourselves we are unable to oppose sin with success. It is "through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body."‡ When "the enemy comes in like a flood" upon the soul, it is "the Spirit of the Lord that lifts up a standard against him."§—Let us make a proper use of this great truth. Let us not suppose that we can make our own hearts holy. Let us not attempt this work in our own strength. Let us remember that it is a *divine* work. Let us attempt it in reliance on the Spirit, in dependence on his promised help. Let us pray to Him to sanctify us. Let us fear to

* Prov. xvi. 1. † Rom. viii. 26. ‡ Rom. viii. 13. § Isaiah lix. 19.

grieve, to offend, to provoke him to leave us, without whose presence and aid we never can be made fit for seeing God, and for living in glory.

2. We may observe that Sanctification is a *gradual* work. Many are the steps, and oftentimes slow is the course by which it goes on. The different figures or ways of speaking used in scripture to describe the work, shew this to be the case. Thus the new-born child must pass through many stages ere it come to maturity, unto "the measure of the stature" of the perfect man. The seed sown in the ground bringeth forth, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."* And thus it is with the soul in Sanctification. Its perfect renewal to the divine image, its entire victory over sin, is not completed at once. Long and tedious is the combat between nature and grace. In fact, so long as we are in the body, we are engaged in an unceasing conflict with the power of corruption. Sin slowly retires, nor quits the field till after many and repeated defeats. Nay, oftentimes when seemingly overcome, it will suddenly revive, and struggle again for victory.—This view of the subject is calculated to give hope and comfort to those, who are labouring under a sense of depravity, and feel sin to be strong within them. Such persons are apt to be greatly distressed at the power of remaining corruption. They feel that they cannot love God as they ought; that they cannot serve Him and pray to Him as they should do, and wish to do. They still find themselves subject to unholy affections, to evil thoughts, and to impure imaginations. Neither may they as yet be altogether free from occasionally yielding to their besetting sin. Hence are they filled with unfavourable opinions of themselves; and have gloomy and alarming fears respecting their spiritual state. They perhaps suppose, that if they had true faith in Christ, they should already be sanctified, "whole in body, and soul, and spirit:" and not finding this to be the case, they are ready to conclude, that they are not really christians. My brethren, let me remind such of you as answer this description, that sanctification is a *gradual* work. Though at present you may be far from perfection yet it does not follow that the work of

* Mark iv. 28.

grace is not begun in your soul. Though at present the signs of life may be few and weak, yet it does not follow, that you are altogether dead in trespasses and sins. The very concern and grief which you feel on account of your remaining depravity, afford ground for believing that you are spiritually alive: for the dead feel not. "Despise not then the day of small things." Be thankful for even the little grace which you have, and labour to increase it. Pray for larger supplies of the Spirit. Be watchful. Be diligent. Redouble your exertions. Thus shall your progress in holiness be greater, and your evidences of it become more clear and certain. Thus shall the leaven gradually spread through the meal, until the whole be leavened.

3. Sanctification is a *progressive* or *increasing* work. It cannot in the nature of it be standing still. It must in some degree be going on. If a man be not gaining ground against his corruptions, he is in fact losing it; and thus gives a too plain proof, that he is really without true sanctifying grace. For this seed of holiness, when sown in the heart, like grain sown in the ground, proves itself to be alive by its *growth*. The real Christian, who is born again of the spirit, can never arrive at such a state, as to be satisfied with his present attainments. The better he becomes acquainted with his own heart, and with the holy laws of God, which is the rule and standard of his duty, the more he discovers of his own unworthiness and defects; the more he is dissatisfied with himself, and his present attainments; and the more he is stirred up to fresh endeavours after an increase of holiness: How strikingly was this the case with St. Paul! He tells us that he "counted not himself to have apprehended," that is, to have gained a sufficient degree of holiness: on the contrary, "forgetting those things which were behind"—looking on his past attainments as nothing, and wholly undeserving his notice—he "reached forth unto those things which were before;" he earnestly desired and laboured after greater measures of holiness; and thus, "pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* So powerfully did the principle of sanctifying grace work in this great Apostle.—Let this view of the subject correct the false

* Phil. iii. 13, 14.

notions of those, who imagine that they have already advanced in the divine life as far as they need to advance; that they are as good, as pure, and as holy, as they have any occasion to be: that they may safely lessen their endeavours, and not be troubling themselves about growing in grace. Let such as think thus, be assured, that at present they have no grace at all; that they know nothing of what they themselves really are; nothing, of what they ought really to be. Let them learn, that they are as yet strangers to the work of Sanctification; and have hitherto "no part nor lot in the matter."

Having thus stated some particulars concerning the work of Sanctification, I proceed

II. To consider the great instrument or outward mean, mentioned in the text, by which this work is carried on.

The Instrument or Mean here mentioned is the *Word of God.* Our Lord prays, "Sanctify them *through thy Truth; thy Word* is Truth." God works by means. He is not indeed confined to the use, or in the choice of them: but he generally employs them in accomplishing his purposes. The Holy Spirit, we have already seen, is the blessed agent, the Divine Person, who sanctifies the Sinner; but as we are taught in the text, it is *through the Word*, that he usually vouchsafes his influence. This is the *Instrument*, which, according to the divine plan, he most frequently employs for beginning and carrying on this good work in our hearts. Thus Christians are said by St. Peter to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God;" while, they are afterwards exhorted by the same Apostle, "as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby."*

In considering this Instrument, let us first attend to the *character* here given of it, which strongly points out its importance and excellence. "Thy word is *Truth,*" God himself is Truth. What wonder then if his word be Truth? How can it be otherwise? The word of God, coming from him, must be like him, a copy and image of himself. The Bible, being "given by inspiration from God," written "by holy men of old, who spake" and wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"† is per-

* 1 Peter i. 23. ii. 2. † 2 Tim. iii. 10. 2 Peter i. 21.

fectly true. All the events related in it, undoubtedly took place at the time, and in the manner described. All the information contained in it respecting the Creation of the World, the Fall of Man, and the Redemption by Christ, may be depended on with the most undoubted certainty. All the precious promises of Scripture will surely be fulfilled. All the dreadful threatenings denounced in it, will assuredly be executed. All its prophecies will in due time be exactly accomplished. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* What a blessing should we esteem it, in our present state of ignorance and doubt, to possess this source of unerring truth, to have this clear light shining in a dark place; this sure guide for our feet through the windings and mazes of the wilderness, in which we are wandering! What a treasure should the Bible be to us, when we consider it in the character here given of it by our blessed Lord, as truth; as affording to us on those points, on which it most concerns us to be rightly informed, the clearest and most certain information; information, on which we may depend with full assurance, with unshaken confidence! My brethren, it is in this character that I wish you particularly to consider the Word of God. It is *Truth*. It is the only source and standard of religious truth. All other books, which profess to teach you any thing on religion, are to be believed and depended on only so far as they agree with the Bible. To the same proof are all the sermons which you hear to be brought. By this standard they must be tried. If the doctrines set forth in them be not agreeable to scripture, you are not bound to regard them, nay, you are bound not to regard them. But, on the other hand, remember, that if they *do* agree with the written Word, they are undoubtedly true, and you cannot disregard them without the most fearful danger.

In the next place, let us consider the *Fitness* of this Instrument for the work, in which it is used.

While God works by means, He appoints or chooses such means as are most fitted to attain the end. Thus it is with his Word, considered as the Instrument of Sanc-

* Matt. v. 18.

tification. All its power and virtue are drawn from the accompanying influence of the Spirit; but still in itself it appears to be exactly fitted for accomplishing the end proposed.—In the first place, the Word of God furnishes the strongest *motives* for the attainment of holiness. It sets before us in every possible way the misery and danger of an unsanctified state. It assures us that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It describes in the most lively and affecting language the dreadful consequences of dying with a heart unfit for heaven, and heavenly joys. It teaches us, however, that such by nature *is* our heart; that it is unholy, unclean, even dead in sins; while in the most earnest manner, with the most persuasive arguments it exhorts us to awake from our sleep, to put off the old man and to put on the new man. On the other hand, while the Word of God thus powerfully awakens our fears, it is calculated with equal force to engage our desires on the side of holiness. It describes, as "with the tongue of angels," the blessedness of being like unto God; makes known to us the glory and riches of the inheritance, which is prepared for them that are sanctified; opens to our view the heavenly Jerusalem, "into which nothing unclean shall enter;" and thus by these representations excites in us a longing after that holiness, which alone can fit us for the enjoyment of this happiness.

Again, the Word of God furnishes the strongest *encouragements* to the attainment of holiness. Necessary as the work of Sanctification must appear, we might yet despair of its ever being accomplished. The difficulty might appear so great, as to discourage our hopes and dispirit our exertions. But the Scriptures tend much to quiet our apprehensions, to awaken our hopes, and to animate our endeavours. They set before us the most promising prospect of success. They assure us that the recovery of our soul from sin to holiness may surely be attained, if we have recourse to the proper means. They inform us, that it is a work which God delights should be done; for "this is the will of God, even our sanctification."* They teach us that this was the great object which Christ came from heaven to accomplish; that for the attainment of it he suffered, and died, and now inter-

* 1 Thess. iv. 3.

cedes at the right hand of God. They set before us many signal instances of men, who, naturally of like passions with ourselves, born in sin, and the slaves of iniquity, yet by the power of the Gospel were enabled to overcome their corruptions, and to walk in newness of life. Thus does the Word of God *encourage* us to seek this blessing for ourselves.

Further, it furnishes the plainest *directions* for the attainment of holiness. While the Scriptures excite in us a desire after holiness; while they encourage us to the pursuit of it; they also shew us how it may be attained; they direct us to the use of proper means for the sanctifying of our hearts. They bid us undertake this great work, not in our own strength, but in the promised strength of the Holy Ghost. They teach us how to pray for the Spirit. They direct us to add to our prayers, watchfulness, diligence, and perseverance. They warn us of the dangers to which we are chiefly liable, and of the evils, against which we should especially guard: while by the most edifying examples, as well as the most instructive precepts, they point out to us the steps, which we should either take or avoid, in advancing from a state of sin to a state of holiness.

Upon the whole then, how *fitted* is this instrument to the work, in which it is used! By what more suitable means could the Spirit begin and carry on the work of Sanctification in our hearts, than by the *motives*, the *encouragements*, and the *directions* set forth in the Word of God: means, directly calculated to promote the end proposed, and to become in the hand of the Spirit effectual for accomplishing this gracious purpose!

But while we especially admire the wisdom of God in this part of his dispensation of the covenant of grace; let us derive from the subject a lesson of practical utility. —If it be through the Word, that we are sanctified; if the Bible be the great instrument, which the Spirit employs for renewing our hearts: then, my brethren, let us make the Bible our study. Let us read the word with reverence, and attention. Let us endeavour to become more and more acquainted with it. Let us treasure it up in our minds, and store it in our memories, that so it may

"dwell in us richly in all wisdom."* Especially let us pray, that it may be "mixed with faith in our hearts," and become in us the seed of eternal life. Without earnest prayer to God to bless his word to our souls, we shall hear or read it with no profit. Pray then that it may be blessed to your soul. Pray that through it you may be sanctified. Pray, that the motives, the encouragements, the directions, which it sets forth for the attainment of holiness, may be made effectual for quickening, for animating, for guiding you in the great and difficult work of Sanctification. Nor let the greatness and difficulty of the work, if you truly desire its accomplishment discourage and alarm you. The Spirit, who has undertaken it, is able to perform it. Christ has prayed for the Sanctification of all his people. If by faith you are one of his, you shall at length be made perfect in holiness. Go on in the appointed way. Use the means prescribed. "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." And "may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XIV.

FALSE AND TRUE MARKS OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

Grow in Grace.—2 *Peter* iii. 18.

CHRISTIANITY is intended to bring us to holiness: to make us holy like God, that we may be happy with Him. If religion does not do this for us, it does nothing. Let us not however suppose, that it does this for us at once. No: holiness is a gradual work. It is a work, indeed, which will never be perfected in this world: for we shall never become perfectly like God, till we shall "see him as he is." But it is a work, which,

* 1 Col. iii. 16.

must be begun, and carried on, and to a considerable degree advanced in this life. It is a work, which cannot, with any safety, be left to stand still: for, in fact, if it be not going forward, it is going backward. Hence St. Peter gives to his readers the admonition in the text, "Grow in Grace." He urges them to make progress in the divine Life; not only to add one Christian virtue to another, (as he had exhorted them to do in the beginning of his Epistle;) but to labour, that every Christian Grace be increased and strengthened in the soul.

What then is it to Grow in Grace? When may the Christian be said to be thus going forward in the Divine Life?

This is a question of the utmost moment: a question, to which I shall endeavour, on the present occasion, to reply.

The subject indeed is one, on which there are many mistakes. False notions are frequently held concerning it; and false marks, by which Growth in Grace may be judged of, are frequently laid down. And from these errors a double evil arises. Persons, who have not any, or at least very doubtful, signs of grace, boast with confidence and presumption of their interest in Christ: while those who are really growing in grace, are greatly discouraged, and thus lose the peace and comfort, which they ought to have. In prosecuting then, this subject, I shall

I. Mention and expose some False Marks of Growth in Grace.

II. State some True ones.

1. One False Mark of Growth in Grace, is *an increase of religious knowledge*. Persons think, that because they *know* more than they did on religious matters, they are certainly becoming better Christians. But in this opinion they may be greatly mistaken. Grace and knowledge are things utterly different. Knowledge *may* be placed only in the head or understanding: while Grace *must be* seated in the heart or affections. True it is, that when a man is growing in grace, he will at the same time be growing in knowledge; and hence St. Paul prays for the Philippians, that their "love may abound yet more and

more in knowledge and in all judgment."* But it is not true, on the other side, that when a man is growing in knowledge, he is *therefore* growing in Grace. We are told that "knowledge puffeth up."† This is what it naturally does. And when men grow wiser, they oftentimes grow more proud. They become vain and conceited in proportion to their increase of knowledge; are lifted up with a sense of their supposed superiority; and look down upon others with disdain and contempt. Does not St. Paul say in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, "that though he had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, yet he might be nothing?"‡ And what a striking proof of the truth of this saying is the example of the prophet Balaam? He describes himself as the man, "whose eyes were open," "which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High."§ And yet where shall we meet with a man more wicked, more destitute of holiness, than Balaam was? So little is knowledge in divine things a certain mark of grace: and so little reason have those, who possess no better mark than this, to presume on their interest in Christ.

Equally vain is the presumption of those persons, who imagine that they are growing in grace, merely because they find *an increasing pleasure in talking about religion or in hearing others talk about it.* Doubtless this would be a very satisfactory mark, if religion consisted only in *talking* and *hearing.* But this is not the case. When a man indeed becomes truly religious, his conversation will be seasoned with grace. "Out of the good treasure of his heart, he will bring forth good things."—He will find pleasure in discoursing on religious subjects, and with religious people. But this part of the Christian's character, like most others, has its counterfeit; and may be in a degree imitated by those, who are not really christians. Men may talk, and talk well about religion, and find pleasure in talking about it, when they have no religion themselves. The apostle tells us of some, who where "unruly and vain talkers," and of others, who "had turned aside unto vain jangling;" even "desiring

* Philip. i. 2. † 1 Cor. viii. 1. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.
§ Numb. xxiv. 15, 16.

to be teachers of the law," yet "understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed."* Men may find pleasure in talking about religion, because they may love to hear themselves talk; or because it gratifies their vanity by drawing the notice and admiration of others; and there is no difficulty in supposing that a man, who can talk easily on other subjects, may talk in the same manner on religion.—To account then our being able to talk readily about spiritual things, a proof of our spiritual progress, and to conclude that because we are swift to speak, we are therefore growing in Grace, would be sad self-deception. Before we can thus deceive ourselves, we must have quite forgotten what St. Paul says, that "though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels," we *may* yet only be "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." †

The same thing holds good with respect to *hearing* about religion. There are some people, who think that they can never *hear* enough about it: who are running to every place, where they may hear something new; and who seem to measure their Growth in Grace by the length of time which they spend, or the inconveniences which they go through, in hearing the word of God. They imagine that religion is rapidly increasing in their soul, because they bestow so much pains in seeking after the truth, and listen to it with so much eagerness and delight. —But may they not be greatly deceived in this opinion? May not these pains which they take, and this delight which they feel, arise from other causes, than those which are good, and consequently may they not give room for suspecting, that religion is losing ground in their heart instead of gaining it? May not this love of hearing arise from their having "itching ears," which lead them to "heap to themselves teachers?" Such a case is possible. It must surely then be very unwise, as well as unsafe, to try our spiritual state by a mark, which, though we possess it, yet after all proves nothing.

I will notice one other False Mark of Growth in Grace namely, a fancied *zeal for God and religion*. Doubtless "it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing." And religion of all other things most deserves our zeal,

* Titus i. 10. 1 Tim. i. 6, 7. † 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

and indeed claims it from us. But then we know from the case of the Jews, that there may be a "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."* A man, whose disposition is naturally warm on other matters, may be equally warm on spiritual subjects, without his warmth about religion being any proof that he is "growing in Grace." His zeal may in fact be the zeal of maintaining his own opinion from a principle of pride and obstinacy; or the zeal of promoting a party or sect in the church. The Pharisees had great zeal of this kind, for they "compassed heaven and earth to make one proselyte," or convert to their opinions; yet no one will suppose that by so doing they gave any proof of their Growth in Grace. Jehu the king of Israel, shewed great earnestness in the cause of God; and yet if he should hence have concluded that religion was gaining ground in his heart, we know that he would have miserably deceived himself. "Come," says he to Jehonadab, "come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." His zeal shewed itself in destroying the prophets of Baal, and in cutting off the enemies of God: but we are also told, that "he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart."† —The apostles of our Lord might also think that they were growing in grace, when, out of zeal for their Master's honour, they proposed to call down fire on his adversaries. Did Jesus, however, give them any encouragement to think that their zeal was of a heavenly character? No. He strongly reproved them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."‡ From these statements we may plainly see how insufficient, and therefore how deceitful, an evidence of our progress in holiness is that, which often takes the appearance and name of religious zeal.

Having thus mentioned and exposed some of the False Marks of Growth in Grace, by which persons are occasionally led to form a mistaken opinion of their spiritual state, I proceed,

II. To state some True Marks.—God grant, my brethren, that we may find ourselves, on examination, to possess these marks!

1. One real sign of our growing in grace is, our grow-

* Rom. x. 2. † 2 Kings x. 16—31. ‡ Luke ix. 55.

ing in *humility*. Humility is the first of christian graces. It is a part of "that mind which was in Christ Jesus." It is that state and disposition of the heart which is entirely contrary to its natural state and disposition: for, naturally, pride reigns in every heart. To grow then in humility, is, in fact, to be growing more like to Jesus Christ, and less like what we were in our natural state. Here is an undoubted evidence of Growth in Grace. But when may we be said to be growing in humility? We are growing in humility, when we are increasing in lowly thoughts of ourselves, of our pretensions and attainments: when we become more and more deeply abased under a sense of our unworthiness: when we are daily learning to distrust more and more our own understanding: and in lowliness of mind to esteem others better and wiser than ourselves. We are growing in humility, when we find in ourselves an increasing readiness to listen to advice; to receive reproof with meekness and thankfulness; to see others advanced or preferred before us, without envy or repining; to endure contradiction without being stirred up to wrath or strife. These are genuine fruits of true humility; and wherever they are found, clearly prove a Growth in Grace.

2. Another clear proof to the same purpose is an increasing habit of *self-denial*. By nature we are all *self-willed*. Self is the great idol which we worship. Self-interest is the grand object which we pursue. We love to please ourselves; to advance ourselves. We think that our own concerns are of the first importance; and that those of all other persons are to give way to ours. But Grace teaches us a different lesson. It teaches us to deny ourselves; to resist and subdue this selfish principle in our hearts. Grace bids us "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;"* to care for others, for their concerns and interests equally with our own. It bids us even to deprive ourselves of seeming advantages, and to abstain from the use of our privileges, rather than run any risk of proving an hindrance, or doing an injury to others: and this not only in our worldly transactions, but also in our spiritual concerns. Of this self-denying forbearance for the sake

* Philip. ii. 4.

and benefit of others, St. Paul sets a striking example; when he declares, that "if meat make his brother to offend, he would eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest he make his brother to offend."* Do we find then that we are daily increasing in this habit of self-denial? Are we daily becoming less and less self-willed? Do we more frequently oppose and cross our own inclinations? If some supposed good be set before us, are we influenced in our choice or rejection of it, by the consideration, not whether it will be pleasant or unpleasant to our feelings, but whether it will be profitable or hurtful to our spiritual interests? And do we extend the enquiry beyond ourselves to others also? Do we endeavour, even at the expense of not pleasing ourselves, to "please our neighbour for his good to edification?"† If we be acting thus, in this spirit, and with these views, we may conclude, on scriptural grounds, that we are growing in Grace: for this victory over *self*, this mortification of our perverse and selfish will, this disposition to give up our own pleasure or advantage for the comfort and good of others, is decidedly the work of that Holy Spirit, whose fruit is love, gentleness, and goodness.

3. Another true mark of Growth in Grace is an increasing *simplicity and ingenuousness of mind.* Men are naturally prone to falsehood and deception. Being of the seed of the Serpent, who is "a liar and the father of lies," what wonder that, in the language of the psalmist, 'they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies?"‡ The many artifices, impositions, and flatteries allowed, practised and even defended by the generality of men, shew how deeply this propensity is rooted in the natural heart. But Grace opposes itself to every thing of this kind. It condemns and abhors all falsehood, and duplicity, and insincerity of every kind. It admits no excuse, however plausible, for such practices. It requires and promotes "*truth* in the inward parts." The true people of God are expressly said to be "children that will not lie:"§ such, in fact, as Christ describes Nathanael to have been, "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile:"‖ one, in whom there was no deceit, nor cunning; no duplicity,

* 1 Cor. viii. 3. † Rom. xv. 2. ‡ Psalm lviii. 3.
§ Isaiah lxiii. 8. ‖ John i. 47.

nor falsehood; but a simple, an open, and an ingenuous mind. Do you find in yourselves this mark of Grace? If you *deliberately allow* yourselves to act a double part, you have no Grace at all. You are clearly still of the seed of the Serpent. But if you are growing in Grace, you are growing in a hatred of all deceit and artifice. You reject with increasing abhorrence every plan, whether suggested by others, or by your own heart, or by the father of lies, which would lead you to dissemble or deceive. You strive not to be drawn into the practice of such sin, by any crafty pretences, which may be made to hide its wickedness. You know that falsehood is falsehood, and sin is sin, however dressed out and recommended by gaudy colouring. You habitually search your heart, and watch and pray, lest, in this respect, it should be imposed on by its own natural deceitfulness, or by the "cunning craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive," or by the subtilty of the Serpent, who aims to beguile you of your christian simplicity; that simplicity which is the surest evidence, and the brightest ornament, of the christian character. God grant, my brethren, that we may have this mark of our Growth in Grace clear and decisive!

4. I shall briefly mention one other mark; A growing *tenderness of conscience.* Men in their natural state have little or no fear of sinning. They are seldom prevented from giving way to their inclinations by the dread of offending God. But it is not so with the renewed man. Grace teaches him to fear sin, and to dread offending God. Hence the more he grows in Grace, the more he grows in tenderness of conscience; the more anxious he becomes on every occasion to know what the will of God is, and the more careful in suiting his conduct to it. Is any scheme proposed to him? He does not listen to the crafty reasonings of men: but enquires, 'What says the Bible? What are the plain and positive directions of Scripture?' To these he instantly submits; nor thinks himself allowed on any pretence to dispute or disobey them. Though an object appear in itself to be good and desirable; yet he does not feel himself justified in following it by means, which the word of God condemns. He dreads doing evil that good may come.

Where his conscience, enlightened by Scripture, is not perfectly clear with respect to the lawfulness of any action, he takes the safe side and prudently forbears from venturing upon it. Thus he proves the power of Grace on his soul.

Such, my brethren, are some True Marks of Growth in Grace. Many others might be brought forward. I have chosen such as appeared to me most plain and useful. I am sure that if properly applied to your hearts, they will prevent your being in any error on this important point. I shall now conclude with giving you some advice for promoting your Growth in Grace. When the Apostle exhorts you to grow in Grace, he bids you to use those means, by which this end will be most certainly attained.

Those means are chiefly, *secret prayer, private study of the word of God*, and *serious self-examination*. The man who most frequently and most diligently uses these means, will grow the most rapidly in Grace. Of course, it is supposed that they are accompanied with a regular attendance on the public ordinances of religion, which no man, who would grow in Grace, can safely neglect. But they are the *private means*, on which I now lay particular stress; because they are those, which it is to be feared are frequently altogether neglected, or carelessly followed even by many, who attend the public ordinances; and because the most constant use of public means will, comparatively, but little profit without them. Grace is best increased in the soul, not by using *one* of the means of Grace, to the neglect of the rest, but by using them *all* in their proper season, order, and proportion. It is in the *closet* that by prayer and meditation you must digest what you have heard in the *church*. Be earnest then, be frequent, be regular in the use of these private means. The knowledge, which you will gain from them, will be most useful knowledge; the knowledge of yourselves. Would to God, that we had all more of this knowledge! There would then be no doubt but that we should grow in Grace. May the Lord increase it in us, for his mercy's sake in Christ Jesus!

SERMON XV.

THE DUTY OF LETTING OUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN.

Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works and glorify your Father, which is in Heaven.
Matthew v. 16.

THE disciples of Christ are "a peculiar people." Though living *in* the world, they are yet not *of* the world. They possess pleasures and privileges peculiarly their own. They have also peculiar duties belonging to them, and are called to the discharge of them by peculiar motives. Our Saviour, a little before the text, had told his disciples, that they were "the Light of the World." This title, indeed, more directly belonged to himself: for He is the *true Light:* the real source of all knowledge, happiness, holiness, and glory. But still in a lower sense the name may be given to all his people. Receiving light from Him, they "shine as lights in the world." They are born again of his spirit. Their eyes have been opened to know the Saviour; to understand the nature of his kingdom; to see their need of his salvation. They have been brought to renounce themselves, their own righteousness and strength; to believe on Christ for the saving of their souls; and in a dependence on his promised grace, to seek after holiness of heart and life. Thus, having been once darkness, they are now "light in the Lord." That change, which has taken place in their views, their hopes, and their pursuits; that spiritual knowledge which they have received; that principle of grace, which has been implanted in them, may well be expressed by the idea of *light;* they have been "called out of darkness into marvellous light." In the text, our blessed Lord shews them *how* they should use the light granted to them, and *why* they should use it thus.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may

see your good works. If Christ have put light into his people, he does not intend that they should hide it, but that they should let it shine in the sight of the world. "Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house." Thus Christians are not to bury their talents in the earth; they are to bring them into exercise; they are to shew forth in their lives the blessed effects of religion upon their hearts. They are in fact, "a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid." Their conduct will be narrowly watched. The eyes of the world will be constantly fixed on them. Their profession of greater piety will draw the notice of mankind, who will not be disposed to judge them in the most favourable manner. Hence are they particularly exhorted to "let their light *so* shine before men, that they may see their good works." It must be their anxious desire and study to maintain *good* works; to shew forth a bright pattern of every Christian grace; to let the fruits of righteousness be seen in their whole life and conversation; and in short so to "avoid even the appearance of evil," as not to give any just occasion of reproach, nor to let "their good be evil spoken of."

And *why* should they thus use the light vouchsafed to them? What *end* should they have in view in thus endeavouring, that their good works may be seen of men? Is it that they may obtain the praise of men: that they may be extolled for their piety; and may advance their own honour and credit in the world? No. Such a motive might influence and satisfy the Pharisees, who "loved the praise of men," and sought the honour which cometh from man only. But it is not the motive of the Christian. He must act from a higher principle. His end must as far surpass the end of the Pharisees, as his righteousness must exceed their righteousness. It is not his own glory, but God's glory, which he is to have in view. He is to let men see his good works, that "they may *glorify his* Father, which is in heaven." The holy and exemplary life of the true Christian brings the greatest honour to God. It sets forth, in the clearest light, the reality and the power of religion; and tends above all other means to win men to Christ. It softens prejudices, removes ob-

jections, and silences the voice of calumny. When men behold the professed servant of Christ, living in every respect agreeably to his holy profession; they are forced, secretly at least, to admit the excellence of the Gospel. They cannot but feel, that a *tree*, which brings forth such good fruit, must in itself be good: and thus oftentimes are they gradually led to glorify God by embracing that Gospel, which except it had been thus recommended, they would perhaps have persisted in rejecting. This then must be the object of Christians, to let their "conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ," that so they may "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things," and "shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."*

Having thus given a general view of the admonition in the text, I shall now go further into particulars. I shall mention some leading branches of the duty prescribed under the command of "letting our light shine before men." The general precept will contain many important particulars.

In the first place, the true Christian must shew that he is *in earnest* about religion. He must shew, that *Heaven* is the object, at which he aims; and that nothing less than heaven, will satisfy his desires. He *professes* to be looking for a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;"† and he must let it clearly be seen, that he really *is* looking for it. He must let it clearly be seen how deeply his heart feels those great truths, of which he avows his belief. To this end he must make religion his grand and principal concern. He must let it appear, that the interests of his soul are those nearest to his heart. He must readily make every sacrifice, which conscience demands. He must cheerfully submit to all the difficulties, the reproaches, and even the losses, which he may be called upon in the path of duty to undergo. In the choice of his habitation, and of his employment, (so far as it is in his power to choose;) he must decidedly shew, that he is governed by religious considerations. He must not *prefer* for the sake of his temporal benefit, to dwell in a place, where he cannot enjoy spiritual advantages, nor to follow a business, which mani-

1 Peter ii. 9. † Heb. ii. x.

festly is hurtful to the good of his soul. In like manner, in the management of his worldly affairs, he must let it be clearly seen that he is not influenced by a worldly mind; that his heart is not upon earth; that he pursues his worldly calling from a principle of duty, not from a sordid love of gain; and that in truth, his treasures are in heaven. He must therefore not only "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" not only avoid every thing which is fraudulent and unjust in his dealings with others; not only openly protest against those iniquitous practices, which the custom of trade too frequently countenances and approves, but also, he must "let his *moderation* be known unto all men." He must not push his gains with seeming eagerness, even to the utmost lawful extent. He must exercise forbearance. He must be content with moderate profits. He must sometimes even forego advantages, which in themselves he might innocently take, lest he should seem to give any ground for suspecting, that his heart is secretly set upon these things. Thus also with respect to worldly pleasures, he must endeavour to convince men that the pleasures which religion furnishes, are far greater than those which the world can yield. While therefore he conscientiously keeps from joining in those trifling and too often profane amusements, in which ungodly men profess to seek their happiness, he must yet labour to show, that in keeping from these things, he is, in respect to real happiness, no loser, but even a gainer, by religion. He must avoid every thing, which may look like moroseness and gloom. He must cultivate a cheerfulness of spirit. He must aim to shew in his whole deportment that contentment and tranquillity, which naturally flow from heavenly affections, from a mind at peace with God, and from a hope full of immortality. In these respects, then, let his light shine before men.

In the second place, the duty enjoined in the text requires an habitual *holiness* of life. By holiness, is meant an abhorrence of every thing which is sinful, and a decided separation from it. The true christian must obey the call, "come out from among them and be ye separate: touch not the unclean thing."* He must be ex-

* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

emplary "in all holy conversation and godliness." He must oppose sin, and protest against it in whatever shape it may appear. He must "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." By his admonition, by his authority, he must check and discountenance every ungodly practice in others. In his own conduct he must be perfectly free from all impurity, excess and sensuality. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."* Does the professed disciple of Christ give way to fleshly lusts? Does he even occasionally, "run with others to the same excess of riot?" This is not to "let his light shine before men," but to shew that the light within him is darkness. This is not to adorn, but to disgrace the doctrine of God his Saviour. This is not to exalt, but to lower, religion in the eyes of the world. Let the true Christian watchfully keep from every thing, which in the slightest degree can lead to such consequences. Let him flee from fleshly lusts. Let him follow after holiness. Finally, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," let him think of, let him practise these things.†

But further, another important branch of this duty consists in the proper government of the tempers. Perhaps in no one point does the Christian let his light shine before men with greater effect, than in shewing that he lives under the habitual influence of a christian spirit. The spirit, which christianity enjoins and produces, is so widely different from the spirit of the world, and so infinitely superior to it, that as it cannot fail of being noticed, so it cannot fail of being admired even by those, who are strangers to its power. Do you ask in what particulars this spirit shews itself? I answer, in the exercise of humility, of meekness, of gentleness; in a patient bearing of injuries; in a readiness to forgive offences; in an uniform endeavour to overcome evil with good; in self-denial and disinterestedness; in universal kindness; and courtesy; in slowness to wrath; in an un-

* Isaiah lii. 2.—2 Tim. ii. 19. † Philip. iv. 8.

willingness to hear or to speak evil of others; in a forwardness to defend, to advise, and to assist them; in loving our enemies; in blessing them that curse us; in doing good to them that hate us. These are genuine fruits of true Christianity. These are fruits, which can really grow on no other tree: for they are the blessed effects of that Holy Spirit, who is "given to them that believe." In the exercise of these heavenly tempers the Christian Character shines forth with the brightest lustre. In these heavenly tempers, then, the Christian must especially labour to excel. Would he glorify his Father which is in heaven, he must display in his daily conversation these fruits of the Spirit; and thus shew forth the power of the Gospel in renewing the soul of man, and moulding it to the image of that "mind which was in Christ Jesus."

I shall mention only one other branch of the precept in the text.

The Christian must "let his light shine before men," by discharging in a faithful, a diligent, and a consistent manner the personal and particular duties of his station

As a *Member* of *Society*, he must be distinguished by a blameless and an inoffensive conduct, by a simplicity and an ingenuousness of character, free from every degree of guile, by uprightness and fidelity in all his engagements.

As a *Subject*, he must be orderly, peaceable and submissive. He must render to all their due, "tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom." He must cheerfully pay his full share to the public expenses. He must obey magistrates, and them that have the rule over him. He must not indulge in "railing accusation" against his superiors, but by contributing all in his power to the support of civil government, he must shew his grateful sense of the blessings which he receives from it.

As a *Member of the Church of Christ*, he must shew love and good will to all the other members of the same body. However in some points they may differ from him in judgement, or in forms, he is not on that account to shut them out from his heart; or to suppose that such a difference is any ground of enmity against them. At the same time he must not needlessly or on slight grounds create or countenance dissensions in the church. He

must endeavour to promote and to maintain peace, order, and unity in the body of Christ.

As a *Neighbour*, he must be kind, friendly and accommodating. He must shew, that he has a regard for others as well as for himself; that he respects and consults their happiness and interests equally with his own. He must be no backbiter, slanderer, nor evil speaker. His discourse must be mild and instructive. He must labour to prevent quarrels, to reconcile those who differ; to comfort the afflicted. In short, he must be "ready for every good work," and in all his dealings with others, must shew the heavenly principle, which dwells and works in his heart.

Is he a *Father?* He must be distinguished by a proper regard to the eternal interest of his children; by bringing them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" by early training them to habits of industry, honesty, sobriety, and submission; and in all circumstances by preferring the good of their souls to that of their bodies.

Is he *a Son?* He must show the excellence of his principles "by loving, honouring, and succouring both his father and mother;" by consulting their ease and happiness; by listening to their advice; by submitting in all lawful things to their commands; by contributing to their wants; by bearing with their infirmities; by drawing a veil over their faults.

Is he *a Master*? Here also his Christian character must shine forth. He must be kind both to the bodies and to the souls of his servants. He must endeavour to maintain good order among them. He must not exact their labour with severity, nor treat them with harshness. He must not knowingly permit evil among them; and must be as ready to reprove them for offences committed against God, as for offences committed against himself.

Is he *a Servant?* As a servant let him "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." Let him be "obedient unto his own master, and please him well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity."* Let him perform his work, "not with eye service as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men."

* Titus ii. 9.—Ephes. vi. 6, 7.

Is he *a Husband?* Here also let his light shine before men. Let him promote the spiritual, as well as the temporal good of his wife. Let him consult her happiness, share in her troubles, and help to diminish her labours. Need I stop to observe, that, in substance, all these directions equally belong also to the other sex. Let those women, "who profess godliness," prove the sincerity of their profession by discharging, in a consistent manner, the several duties of wives, of mothers, of daughters, of mistresses of families, of servants. Let all these, in their respective stations, put on "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; which is in the sight of God of great price."* Thus let them adorn the Gospel and win many to Christ.

But to bring the subject to a close, I shall only add under this head, that while the Christian thus lets his light shine before men, he must be careful to keep within the limits of his proper place. He must discharge all these duties with an especial regard to that particular station, in which the Lord has placed him. It is this which crowns the whole, and gives perfection and beauty to the Christian character. Without this, in fact, the end so much to be desired, will be entirely lost. Does the professed disciple of Christ intrude beyond his proper line of duty? Does he meddle with matters in which he has no concern? Does he push himself into situations or employments, for which he is neither designed nor qualified? Such conduct will very much lessen, nay may utterly destroy, all the good, which his example, however otherwise unblameable and even excellent, might have done. In the eyes of those, who are disposed to judge him most charitably, he will appear at the best to be carried away by "a zeal without knowledge." But in the opinion of the more numerous part of mankind, who are far from being inclined to shew favour to a religious character, his injudicious conduct will be considered as springing from presumption, from officiousness, from impatience of control, or from a secret desire of introducing confusion and disorder. It is true that they may mistake his motive. But he clearly gives too just ground for the mistake. So that in acting thus, far from "letting his light *shine* before men," he, in fact, darkens

* 1 Peter iii. 4.

it; he dims the brightness of his character; and instead of winning others to Christ by his example, helps to drive them from him.—"Let all things be done decently and in order."* For God is the God, not of confusion, but of order,

Having thus stated some particulars of the duty enjoined in the text, it now only remains, my brethren, to press you earnestly to the discharge of it. If you are truly Christians (and with such only can there be a hope of prevailing) you cannot but see, you cannot but feel, the force of the argument in the text. If you have yourselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, you cannot but wish to bring others to share his grace. If you have seen his glory, as it shines forth in the Gospel, you cannot but desire to make that glory known, to exalt and magnify it yourselves, to bring others to exalt and magnify it. You have been shewn, then, *how* these desires and wishes may be gratified. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." Thus shall you glorify God. Thus shall you lead others to glorify him also. There is not one among the meanest, the poorest, the weakest Christians but may do this. Though you may be cut off from almost all other means of rendering glory to God, you may yet render it to him by your good example. By your good example you may be instrumental in saving a fellow-sinner. By your good example you certainly will strengthen the hands of your ministers, will enliven their hopes; will cheer their hearts; and will cause all the Lord's people to rejoice. What need I say more? Go, my brethren, go forth under the sense of these most weighty truths. "Be burning and shining lights." "Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life."† And may the God of all peace keep you to his heavenly Kingdom!

* 1 Cor. xiv. 40. † Phil. ii. 15, 16.

SERMON XVI.

THE WORLD OVERCOME BY FAITH.

This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith
1 *John* v. 4.

THERE are three great enemies to our salvation, the devil, the world, and the flesh. "Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." He is ever watchful and labouring to draw us into sin. The chief source from which he draws his temptations, is the world; while we have within us an evil heart too ready to listen and to yield to such temptations. So that in fact, to overcome the world is at the same time to overcome the devil and the flesh; it is at once to defeat the tempter, and to deny ourselves. This victory, then, over the world, may, with great reason be set forth as a decisive mark of the true Christian, who by his own profession is "manfully to fight under the banner of Christ against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

It is this victory of which St. John speaks in the text. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our Faith." The subject is one of very great importance to the Christian: and in discoursing on it from these words, I shall take occasion to shew three things:

I. What is meant by overcoming the World.

II. That the Instrument which overcomes the World is Faith.

III. How Faith obtains this victory.

I. By the world is here meant all that is in the world; the things of the world, and the men of the world: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life:"* all those gratifications which the world offers to our sensual, to our covetous, or to our ambitious inclina-

* 1 John ii. 16.

tions. To overcome the world is so to withstand these tempting offers, as neither to have our hearts entangled, nor our conduct governed by them. It is to go on in the path of holy obedience, notwithstanding all opposition from the things of the world, neither drawn into sin by its promises on the one hand, nor driven from our duty by its threatenings on the other. In short, the man who overcomes the world, is one who gets the better both of his natural love of the world, and of his natural fear of it: of his natural love of its honour, riches, pleasures, and friendship, and of his natural fear of its crosses, hatred, and contempt.

The Scriptures furnish many instances of persons, who have thus overcome the world. Their examples will enable us still more clearly to perceive what this victory is. When Abraham, at the divine command, left his country, and family, and friends, and went out, not knowing whither he went, and sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country,"* he overcame the world. When Moses willingly gave up the pleasures of a court, and the honours of a kingdom, and "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God,"† he overcame the world. When Paul and the other apostles "endured such a great fight of afflictions;" submitted to be reviled and persecuted;" to suffer hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, and even "to be always delivered unto death,"‡ they overcame the world. In these several instances we see that the persons mentioned were not prevailed on by worldly considerations to turn from the path of duty. Whether the world smiled or frowned on them; whether it approved or condemned their conduct; whether they were gainers or losers in this world; this was not the thing which they took into account. They were men, indeed, of like passions with ourselves: and as such, they must have felt, as we should feel in like situations and circumstances. To incur scorn and ridicule, to be torn from their families and homes, to renounce wealth and honour, and to suffer poverty, pain, and persecution, were trials, which doubtless, were as severe to them as they would be to us. They could not but feel these things. Mark, however, their conduct. They suffered not their

* Hebrews xi. 8, 9. † Hebrews xi. 25. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 10.

feelings to prevail over their sense of duty. They did not govern their actions by what the world said or thought of them: by what it did; by what it tempted them to do, or threatened to do against them. None of these things moved them. They overcame the world. I shew,

II. That the instrument, which overcomes the World is Faith.

Great things are spoken in Scriptures of Faith; and great works are said to be done by it. It is "*by faith* that we live." It is "*through faith* that we are saved." We are "justified *by faith*." "We are sanctified *by faith*." It is *faith* which purifies the heart." It is *faith* which works by love."* And here we are further told, that it is "*faith* which overcomes the world." What then is this wonderful instrument, by which such mighty works are done?—What is the Faith, of which such great things are spoken? Faith in general, is a dependence on the testimony of another. It is the relying on his word for the truth of what he reports. If we believe what he says; if we give credit to any fact which he relates; if we trust to any promise which he makes, we may then be said to have faith in his word. Now the faith, of which we speak, is a dependence on the testimony of God. It is a relying on the truth of *His* word. It is a firm persuasion, that what he says is true, what he foretells will come to pass. And hence we may observe, how wicked in itself, as well as hateful to God, is unbelief; for it directly strikes at his Truth, that glorious perfection of his character. Unbelief dishonours God by making him a liar, by saying, that his word is not to be trusted, that no credit is to be given to his threatenings, no dependence to be placed on his promises. Hence also we may further observe, that as unbelief is most wicked and hateful, so also it is most ureasonable. For what can be more unreasonable than to deny or doubt the word of Him, who is Truth itself? Faith builds its trust on that, which reason cannot but approve as the safest of all grounds, the truth and faithfulness of God. On the other hand, let us not suppose, that divine faith is the work merely of human reason. This is not the case.

* Heb. x. 38. Ephes. ii. 8. Rom. iii. 28. Acts xxvi. 18. xv. 9. Gal. v. 6.

Such a belief, as human reason alone could produce, would never do the mighty works, which faith is said to do. It might convince the understanding; but it would never touch or influence the heart. The faith, which must do this, though it agree with human reason, yet springs from a higher source. It comes down from above. It is a divine work, wrought not by reason, but by the Spirit of God. It is a grace, implanted and seated in the soul. It is a heavenly principle fixed and working in the heart: the gift and operation of God. This is faith; that faith, of which such glorious things are spoken: the Christian's "shield," as the apostle calls it "wherewith he is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked:"* the Instrument, as we see in the text, which overcometh the world. Look at the instances, which have been already noticed, of persons who have obtained this victory, and you will find that the instrument, by which they obtained it, was the one here mentioned. This was the victory, which overcame the world, even their faith. It was "by *faith* that Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went."† It was "by *faith* that Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."‡ It was through "the same spirit of *faith*,"§ that St. Paul and the other apostles fainted not at their manifold tribulations. In these several instances the persons described, believed in God, accounted him faithful to his word, and were fully persuaded, that what he had said, he would surely bring to pass. Under this persuasion they acted. This persuasion, this faith it was that led them to overcome the temptations, by which they were beset; that enabled them to get the better both of their natural love of the world, and of their natural fear of it. Let us see,

III. How faith obtains this victory.

Every instrument, which God appoints or uses, is most wisely fitted to the end designed. Thus it is with faith. It is employed to subdue in the hearts of men, their natural love and fear of the present evil world. And how does it do this? By opening to their views a future and

* Ephes. vi. 16. † Heb. x. 8. ‡ Heb. xi. 14. § 2 Cor. iv. 13.

more valuable world. *Why* did Abraham "sojourn in the land of promise, as in a strange country?" Because by faith "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* *Why* did Moses "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?" Because by faith he saw, that these pleasures were only "for a season," and that "the reproach of Christ was greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of reward."† *Why* did St. Paul and the other apostles faint not at their tribulations? Because by faith they saw, that "their light affliction, which was but for a moment, worked for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while they looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."‡ In all these instances faith overcame this world, by making known another. And thus it does in every instance, in which it obtains the victory. Whence comes it, that men are naturally so devoted to the world; so desirous of the good, so afraid of the evil, which it sets before them? Because naturally they see nothing beyond this world. "The god of this world has blinded their eyes." The mind is darkened, and reaches not to unseen and spiritual things. But faith, when it comes, takes away this darkness; opens the eye of the mind; discloses to it a new world; brings unseen things to sight; and gives to spiritual things substance and reality. And what a wonderful change is thus brought about in the apprehensions and judgment of the soul! Standing, as it were, on *new* ground, and seeing every object in a *new* light, it learns to value every thing in a *new* way. It once thought highly of this world, of its riches, its pleasures, and its friendship. It judged these things deserving of all its care, and followed them with all its might. But it now sees them in their true colours. It sees, that, compared with unseen things, they are but vanity: that all the *riches* of the world cannot profit a man, if he should lose himself or be cast away; that the *pleasures* of the world are deceitful and perishing, and lead in the end to shame and misery; that "the *friendship* of the world is enmity with God."

* Heb. xi. 10. † Heq. xi. 25, 26. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

Thus are the affections gradually weaned from worldly things; while other objects of real value and infinite importance, are presented to the view—the favour of God; a life of communion with him; a blessed death; a Crown of righteousness; a glorious immortality; above all *that* object, which before every other demands unceasing gratitude, love and admiration—the great mystery of redemption, "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" the love of the Father in giving his Son for sinners, the love of the incarnate Son in dying for them on the cross. This glorious object, when seen by the eye of faith completes the victory over the love of the world. *Here* men see the world in its true light and character, as the crucifier of the Son of God. Henceforth they love it no longer: "the world is crucified unto them, and they unto the world."—In the same manner Faith overcomes their natural fear of the world. Formerly they were afraid of undergoing poverty, pain, or sorrow. They were afraid of being pointed at as precise and singular, and of incurring the reproach and ridicule of the world. But faith has taught them better things. It has opened their eyes to see the folly of such fears. It shews them that they "who sow in tears shall reap in joy;" that "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." It assures them that "if they be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are they;" that, "if they are persecuted for righteousness' sake, they are blessed; for great is their reward in heaven;" that "if they suffer with Christ, they shall also reign with him."* —Especially, Faith sets before them the true object of their fear, not men, but God; not *men*, who "can kill the body, but after that have no more than they can do;" but *God*, "who after He has killed, has power to cast into hell." Faith bids them to fear *Him;* to fear his wrath and judgments; to fear the loss of their souls, the coming short of the great salvation of the Gospel, the being ashamed of Christ, the doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace. And the fear of these things overcomes the fear of the world.—Its opposition no longer terrifies. Its scorn and enmity are no longer regarded. The emptiness of its threatenings, the weakness of its rage, are

* Psalm cxxvi. 5. Matt. v. 4. 10. 1 Peter iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 12.

clearly seen. Nor can any of these things any more prevent the soul from habitually striving to walk in the path of duty, and to live unto God.—Thus Faith obtains its Victory.

By way of application, my brethren, let me ask, do you thus overcome the world? The question is most important. For remember what St. John says immediately before the text, that "whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." If you do not overcome it, you are not born of Him. Let me then press upon you two leading enquiries on this subject; and may God give you grace to see that you are indeed his children!

1. Do you overcome the world as to its cares, business, and employments? On this point let me be clearly understood. To discharge with fidelity and diligence the work of that station, in which God has placed you, is a part of the service which you owe to him. The proper management of your worldly business, the doing all that is right and in your power for the support and maintenance of yourselves and families, and the attending to the concerns of your particular calling, are duties which the Gospel of Christ commands you to perform. But the question is, with what *views*, and *temper*, and *spirit*, do you perform them? Do you look upon them as your first and great concern; your *main point*, as they are frequently called? Do you give to them the chief place in your heart? Do you perform them merely for their own sake, for the worldly advantages, which they hold out to you, and without a regard to any higher principle or end? It is not the being engaged in worldly concerns, that proves a man to be the slave of the world, but the being engaged in them with a *worldly spirit*. If your heart be set on the world, you clearly have not overcome it. Consider then, when engaged in your worldly callings, on which do you place your heart, on God, or on the world? Which do you most value and seek, his favour or your worldly interests? When you must sacrifice one of them, which do you give up? Do you never pursue your worldly interests by means, which you know to be unlawful and displeasing to God? Do you never neglect your known duty to him, with the view of thereby gaining some little temporal advantage? And when you

meet with losses and disappointments in your worldly concerns, how do you bear them? Do you betray such impatience and grief, as plainly shew how near these concerns are to your heart? Or do you submit to them with resignation and humility, remembering that *your* treasure is in heaven, and saying with holy Job under his heavier trials; "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

3. Do you overcome the world, as to its evil customs, maxims and examples? To do a thing because others do it, is an excuse which numbers plead, for acting contrary to the voice of conscience, and the word of God. They would not appear singular; they would not be called unsocial; therefore they do as the world does. Now in things, which on due consideration we are satisfied are innocent in themselves and also to us, to do as the world does, to follow its customs, and adopt its manners, is a part of that wisdom, which teaches us to avoid the needless giving of offence. Though even here there is a danger, against which we must guard. There is a danger, lest the habit of following the world in things which are indifferent, should lead us in the end to follow it in things which are *not* indifferent. And this danger we shall scarcely avoid, if we are *very anxious* to do *exactly* as the world does in every thing, which is even lawful and innocent. But to be guilty of *sinful* compliances, to "follow the multitude in doing *evil*," this is a criminal conformity to the world, and proves that you do not overcome it. Do you then dare to do what is right, notwithstanding the many bad examples around you? Do you withstand the persuasions of ungodly companions, and the opposition of irreligious friends? Are you proof against the heavy attacks of reproach and ridicule? Are you not ashamed of Christ and his Gospel? Are you not afraid of professing your faith in Him before the face of a sinful generation? Do you bear to be laughed at; to be evil spoken of; to be loaded, it may be, with disgraceful names? Do none of these *so* move you as to prevent you from doing that, which your conscience and the Bible tell you to be right?

In putting, however, these questions I would observe, my brethren, that it is not a perfect victory which I can

suppose any of you to have gained. In this christian attainment, as in every other, you, will find yourselves falling very far short of perfection. In this, however, as in every other, the nearer you come to perfection, the greater will be your peace and happiness. Many lose much of the comforts of religion by suffering the world to keep some power over them. If they do not altogether serve the world, yet they do not overcome it in the degree in which they ought.—See then the importance and necessity of faith: of a strong, a lively, and an active faith: for exactly in proportion to the degree of our faith, will be the degree, in which we overcome the world. If our faith be weak, our opposition to the world will be feeble, and our success against it at the best be little and doubtful. If our faith be strong, we shall fight manfully against the world, and our victory over it will be decisive and clear.—Pray then for faith; for an increase of faith; for the strengthening of your faith. "Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith." Looking unto Him, be of good cheer; for He "has over come the World."* Go forth in his strength, and you shall overcome it also.

SERMON XVII.

BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.—*Matt.* v. 6.

ALL men wish to be happy: but none naturally know how to become so. They have false notions about happiness; and seek it where it never can be found. Ask them, 'Who are happy?' They will tell you, 'The *Great*, the *Rich*, the *Gay*: Those, who have every thing, which this world can give, and who spend their lives in pleasure and enjoyment.' Ask them, 'How they hope to become happy themselves?' They will tell you, 'By

* John xvi. 33.

becoming rich or great; by heaping up worldly things; by living in ease and indulgence.'

But, my brethren, these notions are as dangerous, as they are false; for they set the soul on a vain and ruinous pursuit: nor shall we ever be truly happy, till we better understand what true happiness is. When Christ therefore came into the world he began with setting men right on this point. In his well-known Sermon on the Mount, he plainly told the people, in what true happiness was placed; where it is to be found, and who those are, that have already found it, or are in the way to find it. What he teaches on this subject, is indeed very contrary to our natural ideas: and when we hear him say, "Blessed are the *Poor in Spirit*,"—"Blessed are they that *mourn*,"—"Blessed are they which are *persecuted* for righteousness' sake."*—we may perhaps be tempted to ask. "How can these things be?"

Let us, however, remember that these are the very sayings of Him, who is "the Way, the *Truth*, and the Life,"† of Him, who, from love to our souls, came down from heaven, that he might teach us the way to heaven. Let us then receive his words with thankfulness, with humility, and with faith; and instead of doubting their truth, endeavour to understand them to our profit.

May such at this time be the case with the particular passage which I have chosen for the text; and which is one of those very sayings of Christ, in which he teaches us what true happiness is. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Let us in these words enquire,

I. Who are the Persons here mentioned as Blessed.

II. In what respect they are Blessed.

I. The Persons mentioned as Blessed, are thus described: "They hunger and thirst after righteousness." It is plain that these words are spoken not of the body, but of the soul. It is also plain, what the words thus spoken mean. If we were told that any person *hungered* or *thirsted* after such or such a thing, we should at once know what was meant. We should know it was meant, that he had a strong desire after the thing mentioned,

* Matt. v. 3, 4, 10. † John xiv. 6.

and was very anxious to obtain it. To *thirst for blood*, to *thirst for revenge*, are ways of speaking not uncommon among us, and ways, which we all understand. So that, in short, the words *hungering* or *thirsting*, when spoken of the soul, mean the strong desires and longings of the soul; its earnest wishes for something, without which it will no more be satisfied than the body, when hungry or thirsty, will be satisfied without food or drink. Thus far then, what is said of the persons in the text, may be said of all men. For all men have something in view, which they earnestly long after, and anxiously desire to obtain. Every soul thus in some way or other *hungers* and *thirsts*. But what makes the grand difference between the persons spoken of in the text, and all other persons whatever, is the thing for which this anxious desire is felt. All other persons hunger and thirst—but after *what?* After some worldly thing; some earthly, perishable thing. Riches, power, glory, ease, pleasure, these are the things for which they long: these are the things which they earnestly covet and eagerly follow. But it is not thus with the persons, who are said in the text to be Blessed. The things for which they feel so strong a desire are not earthly, but heavenly; not worldly but spiritual; not perishable but eternal. They "hunger and thirst after *Righteousness*." "They set their affections on things *above*." They are "athirst for God." To "win Christ, and to be found in him;" to "know Christ and the power of his resurrection;" to obtain "the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory;" this is in their eyes the "one thing needful;" this is the prize for which they run; the hope which they set before them; the only reward which can satisfy the desires and longings of their soul.

Such, in general, are the persons spoken of in the text as Blessed. But let us now come to particulars.—By *righteousness* we may here chiefly understand *holiness*. And what is holiness? It is that one thing, "without which," as St. Paul tells us, "no man shall see the Lord." It is, in fact, that likeness to God, which only can fit us for living in his presence, and for enjoying the company of saints and angels. An unholy person must be miserable: for being unlike to God, and so unfit for heaven, he must of necessity be for ever shut out from

the happiness of that blessed place. Now the persons of whom we are speaking, know this to be the case. They know, that if they continue to be unholy, they must be miserable. What therefore they long for, what they hunger and thirst after, is, to be holy; to be made like God, and so to become fit for heaven. This is the strong desire of their heart. Let us see how this desire shews itself, and what it leads them to do.

In the first place they bitterly grieve that they are so unholy. The corruption of their heart is a sore trouble, and a heavy burden to them. They find that when they would do good, evil is present with them. They cannot keep away bad thoughts so constantly as they would wish to do. They cannot get the better of bad tempers so completely as they desire to do. They cannot love and obey God, and hate and overcome sin so entirely as they long to do. When they would pray to God, or hear or read the Scriptures, or do any spiritual duty, they often find their minds dull and heavy and dead. Even though the spirit, through grace be willing, yet the flesh is weak; so that the good, which they would, they do not; but the evil which they would not, that they do. Now all this is a great concern and grief to them. They oftentimes groan being burdened. They go mourning even all the day long; and are ready to cry out with St. Paul, "O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

My brethren, are there not some of you, who know what this concern, this trouble is? Are there not some of you, who feel as these persons feel: who grieve as these persons grieve, because you are so unholy, and find so much evil in your hearts, and love God so coldly, and do him so little service? It is to be hoped that there is many a heart, which at this moment is saying to itself, 'I know what all this means. These are my feelings; I desire above all things to be holy. It is my most earnest wish to love God with all my soul; to shut out of my heart every evil thought; to cleanse myself from all filthiness of the flesh and the Spirit. Alas! that I cannot do thus, is my shame and my grief. He who knows my heart, knows how many bitter pangs I feel, because I am so

* Romans vii. 24.

little what I ought to be. He who sees in secret, sees how many tears I shed on account even of those sins, which no eye but his beholds. O how I long to be loosed from the chains of sin! What joy would it be to me to have the spirit of Christ ever in my heart, binding my will to his, and making me pure even as he is pure.'—Now, my brethren, all, whether many or few, whose hearts thus speak, have so far reason to hope, that they are the persons mentioned in the text. This language and these feelings, are the language and the feelings of those, who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness.—I say *so far* they have reason to hope; for this is not all. It is not enough that a man knows and laments the evil of his heart. That strong desire after holiness of which we are speaking, will lead those who feel it, not only to grieve that they are so unholy, but

In the second place, to *strive*, and to strive *earnestly*, that they may become holy. Hunger and thirst are appetites too strong to be denied or trifled with. The man who feels them, will not be content merely with wishing for something to gratify them, or with lamenting his want of it. He will strive to obtain it. He will use his utmost endeavours to obtain it. He will not be satisfied without obtaining it; nor will he put up with any thing else in the room of it.—Thus it is with the soul, which hungers and thirsts after holiness. It *longs* to be holy, and therefore it *strives* to be holy. It does not content itself with empty wishes and vain lamentations. It *labours* after holiness. It earnestly prays for grace to be kept from evil, and to be strengthened for every good work. It watches and fights against sin. It shuns such places, and companies, and practices as may be likely to draw it into sin. It denies the flesh. It mortifies the deeds of the body. It daily takes up the cross and follows Christ. If it should be said to a person, whose soul is thus athirst after holiness, 'You are taking too much pains in this matter. You are too severe, and self-denying, and scrupulous. Give yourself a little ease. Take a little indulgence. Think how much you are hurting yourself by this unnecessary strictness. How many friends you are offending. How much gain you are losing. Attend more to your own interests. Eat, drink, and be merry!'

Would he listen to such advice? would he be prevailed on by such reasoning to take less care of his soul, and to become less strict and scrupulous? No. He would say, 'The things which you offer me, are not the things which I want. I value them not. I desire them not. I long to be holy, that I may be like God, and so may be fit for Heaven. This is my desire, a desire, which the world with all its gains and pleasures, cannot satisfy. If I had them all, I should yet be empty; for they cannot fill my soul, nor keep it at last from miserably perishing.'

And here again, my brethren, may we not hope, that some would speak this language also? May we not hope, that some are so hungering and thirsting after holiness, that they can take up with nothing else: that none of the things which the devil, the world, or the flesh set before them, can satisfy their desires, or turn them from their purpose of dying unto sin, of living unto God, of daily growing in grace, and becoming fitter for Heaven:—If this be the case with you, my friends, you have indeed great reason to rejoice; for you are, in truth, the *very* persons mentioned in the text. You are those, whom Christ himself has called blessed. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness,"

Let us enquire,

II. In what respects they are blessed.

In beginning this enquiry, there is one observation, which may be profitably stated. To be blessed is to be in a truly happy condition. But it is not necessary for a man, who is blessed, to *know* that he is in this condition. He may be in a truly happy state without *feeling*, that he is so. You would say, that the criminal, whose pardon is sealed, is in a happy state, though at present he may know nothing of the mercy shown to him. You would say, that the sick man, who is no longer in danger of dying, is in a happy condition, though as yet he may himself be utterly ignorant of the favourable turn in his disorder. Let no one, therefore, say, 'I am not one of the persons spoken of in the text, because I do not *find* myself to be truly happy. I have many doubts and fears about my salvation. I am weary and heavy laden because of my sins. How then can I be said to be truly happy? If I were blessed, I should *feel* myself to be so!'

Such reasoning is nothing at all to the purpose. Whether you are blessed or not, does not depend upon what you think or feel on the subject. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, are Blessed,—not because they *now find* themselves to be truly happy,—but because they have a *sure promise that they shall be so hereafter*. This is the reason given in the text. "They shall be filled." Mistake not, however, my meaning. I mean not to say, that they have no happiness at present; or that they are even generally unhappy here. This would be a very false view of their state. For even now the Lord "filleth the hungry with good things." He "maketh them to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth them beside the still waters."* They find the ways of righteousness to be on the whole, "ways of pleasantness and peace;" and would not exchange their present comfort and happiness for the most inviting pleasures of sin. But still, after all, it will not be till the next life, that their "joy shall be *full*." The delights they meet with here are meant only as helps and refreshments by the way, as foretastes and pledges of that happiness to come, which they now long for, and shall then perfectly enjoy.—For then "*they shall* be filled."—Let us see what this promise means.

It means, in the first place, that they shall *have* the things which they long for. They shall not run in vain. They shall win the prize, for which they are striving. Do they now hunger and thirst after Righteousness? They shall obtain Righteousness. Do they now prefer heaven to earth, and choose God before the world? They shall not lose by their preference, nor repent of their choice. They shall live in heaven, and serve God, and see his face for ever. Do they now "count all things but loss, that they may be found in Christ?" They shall be found in Him. Washed in his blood from every stain, they shall stand "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Do they now above all things long for holiness? Is it their earnest desire to be holy as God is holy; to be "perfect even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect?" This desire also shall be gratified. At death they shall have done with sin for ever. The flesh will no longer lust against the spirit. They shall be sanctified

* Luke i. 33. Psalm xxiii. 2.

wholly; and seeing Christ in glory, "as He is, they shall be like Him."

But the promise in the text has a still further meaning. It means that those, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, not only shall *have* the thing which they long for, but shall also be perfectly *satisfied* with it. It shall come up to, and even go far beyond, their largest wishes. "They shall be *filled*." They shall find the joys of heaven to be full and satisfying. They have chosen G[illegible] for their portion, and they shall find Him to be their [illegible] ceeding great reward. They shall then feel, that per[illegible] holiness is perfect happiness. When they "awake up after God's likeness, they shall be satisfied with it." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the Sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed them; and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."*

What glorious truths are these, my brethren! How justly may it be said of the persons in the text, that *they are Blessed!* May all of you, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, make that use of these glorious truths, which you ought to make of them; May they comfort and encourage you under present troubles, and stir you up to a patient continuance in well-doing! It is true, that you now labour and strive, but "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." You now "sow in tears;" but you shall "reap in joy." You now "hunger and thirst;" but hereafter, you "shall be filled." You may be tempted to think that your trials are hard. You may be tempted to fear that you shall fail at last. You may be tempted to keep back something, which God and your conscience bid you to give up. Yield not to these temptations. "Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life." Go on in the narrow way of faith and holiness. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left. This narrow way will surely lead to heaven; and heaven will as surely make amends for all that you have lost or suffered on the road. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard: neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."†

* Rev. vii. 16, 17. † 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Set these things before you. See them now by faith. Soon you shall enter into the full possession and enjoyment of them.

But while the text gives such comfort to those of whom it speaks, what must we say to persons of a contrary character? If we may hope, my brethren, that there are some who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, we cannot but fear also, that there are others, who hunger and irst, but *not* after Righteousness; others who are abouring after the meat, which perisheth, not after it meat, which endureth unto everlasting life: who are eagerly following some worldly, perishable thing, to the neglect of God, of their soul, and of eternity.—O that such persons could be convinced of their folly and danger! You are seeking happiness, where you can never find it. You are toiling for that, which will not repay your labour. You now think, that if you could obtain such or such a thing, which you long for, you should be happy. In this uncertain world, it is very probable, that you never may obtain it. But if you should, you will be as far from happiness as you are at present. You will find something still wanting to complete your happiness. For in truth, none of those things which you are seeking, can satisfy the longings of the soul. Have you not hitherto found this to be the case? Have your plans of worldly happiness answered? Have you ever obtained one single thing, which, when obtained, has made you as happy as you before expected that it would have made you? If one wish have been gratified, has not another been disappointed. If one trouble have been taken away, has not another risen? You have surely found things thus: and thus you must always find them; so long as you hunger and thirst but not after Righteousness. Be warned by past experience. No longer "spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not." "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his Righteousness." Be concerned for your soul. Make it your grand business to provide for another life. So shall you find rest and peace here, and happiness and glory hereafter.

If you reject this advice, tremble for the consequences. The rich man, who received his "good things" in this

world, was tormented in the next. So will it surely be with you. Thus saith the Lord God, "Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."*

SERMON XVIII.

MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE.

I know my Sheep, and am known of mine.—*John* x. 14.*

THERE is no title given in the scriptures to Jesus Christ, which more clearly shews his tender concern and watchful care for his people, than that of a Shepherd: nor is there any, under which he is more frequently set forth. In the Prophecies he is repeatedly spoken of under this character. In the New Testament the same idea is continually presented to us. By St. Paul he is called the "*Great* Shepherd of the Sheep."; By St. Peter the "*Chief* Shepherd."† In the chapter from which the text is taken Christ declares himself to be "the *Good* Shepherd." Twice in the short space of a few verses, he takes this title to himself: at the eleventh verse he says "I am the Good Shepherd," and immediately shews his claim to that title, by the clearest proof. "The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the Sheep."—Again he says at the fourteenth verse, "I am the Good Shepherd," and instantly adds, "and know my Sheep and am known of mine." The knowledge, which he has of his sheep is a further proof of his being "the Good Shepherd:" while the knowledge, which they have of Him, enables them to bear witness, that he is so. It is on this knowledge between Christ and his people, that I purpose on the present occasion to discourse. To this end, let us separately consider the two parts of the text.

* Isaiah lxv. 12, 13. † Heb. xiii. 20. 1 Pet. v. 4.

I. I know my Sheep.

II. I am known of mine.

I. By the Sheep are meant the *true* people of Christ: not all such as call themselves Christians; but those, who are really Christians: *those* who, however far off they *once* may have wandered from the fold, "are now returned unto the Shepherd, and bishop of their Souls." Of these, Christ says, "I know them." There is one sense, in which Christ knows all men: for as God, he is present every where. "His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Nothing is hidden from him. In this sense, he knows those who are not his people, as well as those who are. This then cannot be the only sense, in which the expression "I know my sheep," is to be understood: since it is plainly meant, that the knowledge, which Christ describes himself as having of his people, is in some sense different from that, which he has of them in common with others. We may consider then three respects, in which Christ may be said to *know* his Sheep.

1. He sees and distinguishes them with certainty. We may be often at a loss; nay, we may find it utterly impossible, to discover, whether a person be a real Christian or not. But Christ has no difficulty of this kind. He sees every heart, and looks through every disguise. No outward appearance can impose upon him, nor lead him to form a wrong judgment of the inward state: and while He clearly detects the hypocrite, under the most plausible profession of religion, he no less clearly discerns the true Christian, under all that load of ignorance and infirmity which may sometimes disfigure and oppress him. In any multitude of persons, ever so great, Christ, without any possibility of mistake, perceives "*them that are his*:" and could in a moment separate them from those who are *not his*, with as much certainty and ease, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Let there be only *one* true Christian in the largest congregation, ever assembled upon earth, and the Lord's eye is upon him. He distinguishes him from all the rest. Among the many thousand ungodly inhabitants of Sodom, He distinguished the righteous Lot, "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." Among the irreligious millions of the old

world, He distinguished the just and pious Noah. In this sense then Christ says, "I know my Sheep." However scattered over the face of the earth; however mingled among profane scoffers, or specious hypocrites; in the royal palace, or in the humble cottage; in the secret chamber or in the public assembly; Nathanael under the fig-tree, or Jonah in the belly of the fish; I see and distinguish my people, from all others with unerring certainty.'

2. Christ beholds his people with a favourable regard. He not only sees but approves them. They are viewed by Him with favour and delight. They are the special objects of his love. He sees in them "the travail of his soul," the fruit of his sufferings, and intercession. The world oftentimes overlooks and despises the people of Christ; ranks them with the weak, the foolish, and the mean; and even loads them with disgraceful names, and bitter reproaches. But Christ notices and values them. He deems them the truly honourable and excellent upon earth, He accounts them his Jewels; and "graves them upon the palms of his hands."* Oftentimes they are themselves oppressed with fears and greatly cast down. They deeply feel and lament the depravity of their hearts, and the errors of their lives. They deem themselves unworthy of notice and favour; and perhaps are even sometimes tempted to conclude, that the Lord has forgotten them. But the Lord has not forgotten them. He sees and despises not their broken and contrite hearts. He observes with pleasure their work of faith, their labour of love, their patience of hope: and though he may hide from them the light of his countenance, yet he still continues secretly, to rejoice over them as "the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." In this respect also Christ may truly be understood to say, "I know my sheep."

3. He hath an intimate acquaintance with the spiritual state of his people, and a tender concern for their spiritual interests. He knows the circumstances of each individual among them; his wants and sorrows; the trials and temptations, to which he is particularly exposed: and the peculiar support and consolation, of which he stands in need.

* Isaiah xlix. 16.

He sees those infirmities, which his people lament, and those sinful inclinations under which they groan; and is touched with tender compassion for them: and while he chastens and corrects them for their profit, "in all their afflictions he is himself afflicted." He sees the conflict, which they are carrying on with their subtle enemy and with an ensnaring world: and knows how unable they are, in their own strength, to resist and overcome. He knows how to pity and succour them under temptations, seeing "he himself suffered being tempted." He knows the weakness of their nature; for he himself also "took part of the same," and, sin only excepted, was "in all things made like unto his brethren."* In this respect also Christ "knows his sheep."

We now proceed to the second part of the text.

II. "I am known of Mine."

Not only does Christ know his sheep, but *they know Him*. And what is meant by their knowing Him? It is not a mere knowledge of his being, his person, and his offices, drawn from the Bible, or from sermons, and placed only in the memory. It is not a mere assent to the things, which we are told of Him in the Scriptures. Numbers, who are not Christ's people, know Him in this sense of the word. It is an inward, an heartfelt, a practical knowledge of Christ which is here meant. Such a knowledge as can be gained only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And in this sense, none but those who are really *his* can know Him. Let me point out some few particulars in which this knowledge consists.

1. The People of Christ *know* him as their *Wisdom*. They are sensible that in spiritual things, they are wiser than they formerly were. Once they were living in darkness and ignorance as to heavenly things. They now perceive, that while they thought themselves wise, they were fools. They knew nothing as they ought to have known, of God, of themselves, of sin, of the Gospel. But a great change has been wrought in them. Their understandings have been opened. They see things more distinctly, than they once did. They have new thoughts of God, of their souls, of salvation. And who has wrought this work in them? Christ. He has taken away the veil

* Heb. iii. 17, 18.

from their sight. He has "anointed their eyes with eye-salve, that they may see."* Hence they *know* Him in a way, in which others cannot know him. Others may have "*heard* of Him with the hearing of the ear;" but these spiritually *see* him. They have now an inward knowledge of Him, to which they once were strangers, and of which others can form no idea. And should any one attempt to reason them out of this knowledge, they would say to him, as the blind man restored to sight by our Lord, said to the Pharisees, who endeavoured to persuade him that he had received no benefit from Jesus, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."†

2. The People of Christ *know* him as their *Peace*. They have found the power of his blood, in cleansing the conscience from guilt, and in speaking peace to the troubled mind. They have been made sensible of their dangers as sinners, of the wrath and punishment, which they have brought upon themselves; and they have trembled at the thoughts of a judgment to come. Convinced and alarmed, they have looked around for help. And where have they found it? In Christ. Looking unto him, they have felt their fears taken away, their burden lightened. In his one sacrifice for sin, they have seen a sufficient atonement for all their sins. By faith they have beheld him, bearing their sins in his own body on the tree. And thus by the blood of his Cross, they have found an inward peace and joy, which they had in vain sought by other means. Hence they *know* Christ in a manner, in which others, who have never tasted his pardoning love, are unable to know him. They know him as their peace. They know him as their refuge, to which they constantly flee for protection, from the accusations of Satan, and the threatenings of the law. They know Him as the fountain in which they daily wash their souls from the guilt of sin. They know Him as the Saviour, by a believing trust in whose merits, they are enabled to "go on their way rejoicing."

3. The People of Christ *know* Him as their *Sanctification*. Though they are as yet far from being perfect; and have much sin remaining in them, for which they are

* Rev. iii. 18. † John ix. 25.

greatly grieved and humbled; yet still they are conscious that a very surprising change has been produced in their hearts. They feel that they do not love and serve sin as they once did. They do not live as they once lived, in the allowed disregard of any known duty. They have been enabled to gain the mastery over some bad habits, some evil tempers; and they have learned to find pleasure and delight in those holy exercises, which they once formally attended, or despised, or hated. Who is it that has done all this for them? Christ. They are sensible that this is His doing; and "it is marvellous in their eyes." It is only since they have been brought to trust on Him, that they have found the corruptions of their hearts in any degree subdued. Formerly, they could occasionally make good resolutions of amendment, and could utter many serious promises of forsaking this or that particular sin, but in the time of temptation, all their good resolutions and serious promises melted away and came to nothing. It is only since Christ has been their "all in all," that they have been able to stand. Nay even now they are taught by a daily sense of their own weakness to feel the reality and importance of his promised help. When they attempt any thing in their own strength, they are sure to fail: but when they go forth trusting on his grace, then they find, that "his strength is made perfect in their weakness:" and that they "can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth them." Thus they "know Christ, and the power of his resurrection."*

4. The People of Christ *know* him as their *Consolation.* Many, it may be, are their afflictions: but in Him, they find a sure support in every time of need. Other things may fail. Riches may flee away. Earthly friends may prove unkind, or by death may be torn from them. Worldly prospects may change. But Christ changeth not. He never fails his people. In him they find a constant source of consolation. When every other door of hope has been shut, they have looked to him and have received comfort. They have found him faithful to his promises. In their distress they have cried to him and have been holpen. They have prayed to him, and have

* Philip. iii. 10.

found an answer to their prayer. Many a time it may be, they have been "in heaviness through manifold temptations," but Christ hath cheered them with the light of his countenance; and in due time hath delivered them out of all their troubles. Many a time, it may be, they have been forced to make painful sacrifices for his sake: but he has shewn himself mindful of his word and by his inward consolations has abundantly compensated the losses, which he has called them to endure. Thus can they say with St. Paul, "We know whom we have believed:" while in the experience of past mercies they can also add with the Apostle, "and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him."*

In these respects Christ may truly be understood to say "I am known of mine."

By way of application on this subject, let me enquire, my brethren, do you know Christ? This is not a trifling question, but one, which you are greatly concerned to answer to yourselves. Christ himself, when praying to his Father, says, "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."† And St. Paul tells us, that he "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ Jesus his Lord."‡ What then is *your* knowledge of Christ? Do you know Him as your *Wisdom?* Has He opened your eyes? By his Spirit has He convinced you of sin: shewn to you the evil of your heart: and taught you to see his value and his suitableness to your necessities? Do you know Him as your *Peace?* Is all your hope placed entirely on Him? Do you find that nothing will give peace to your soul, but a believing trust in the blood of Jesus? Do you know Him as your *Sanctification?* On carefully looking into your heart, are you conscious of any "good work," which has been wrought there? Can you with truth say, 'Through the power of Christ I have been enabled to subdue that unlawful propensity; to amend that evil temper; to moderate that worldly desire; to conform myself in some little measure to his pattern and image.' Do you know Christ as your *Consolation?* In your disappointments and afflictions, do you fly to Him for support and comfort? Do you rest upon Him as your

* 2 Tim. i. 12. † John xvii. 3. ‡ Philip. iii. 8.

only Rock? Do you look unto Him alone, as the "hill from whence cometh your help?" "Casting all your care upon Him;" do you find something of that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," keeping and ruling your heart and mind? Without *thus* in some degree *knowing* Christ, you have reason to suspect, that you are not as yet one of his sheep: for his sheep *do know* Him. How then can you be one of his, if you know Him not? But consider, if you be not one of Christ's sheep, in what a state you then are. You have no interest in the care and mercy of the good Shepherd. He has laid down his life for the sheep: but you are not of that number. What then will become of you in the day of judgment? You will stand, not on Christ's right hand, among the sheep, but on his left hand, among the goats. You will hear addressed to you, not those joyful words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father,"—but that dreadful sentence, "Depart ye cursed." Think not that you will be able to avoid detection: that amid so many millions, you will escape unseen, or will be reckoned among his people *then;* because you *appear* to belong to them *now*. Have not so vain a hope. He will divide them with unerring certainty. He "knoweth them that are his." He knoweth at this moment, who among us belong to Him, and who belong to him not. We are told that "two shall be in the field: the one shall be taken, and the other left:" that "two women shall be grinding at the mill: the one shall be taken, and the other left;"* and it is not improbable, but that in some instances the same awful separation will take place between those, who have shared the same religious advantages, attended the same church, heard the same sermons, and, perhaps, sat in the same seat; one shall be taken and another left. Seek, then, my brethren, that ye may now know Christ, and be known of Him. Blessed are those who gain this knowledge. "For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof, than of fine gold." May I not call upon some, to bear witness to this truth? Some, who can declare, that they never knew true happiness, till they knew Jesus Christ? To

* Matt. xxiv. 40, 41.

all such, the view given in the text is full of comfort. In this light, it particularly speaks to such as are poor and tempted, overwhelmed with trouble, or suffering the contempt and enmity of the world. My brethren, let me exhort all, who answer this description; who are filled with fears of their own unworthiness; and, from the many difficulties in their path, are almost tempted to despair; 'Be not afraid. You are under the care of the "good Shepherd." He "knows his sheep." However mean may be your station, you are not overlooked by Him. However greatly your character may be mistaken by your fellow-creatures, you are well known to Him. He perceives the desire of your heart; he hears your secret prayers; he sees his own image on your soul; and will publicly own you for *his*, "in that day when he shall make up his jewels."* In patience, then, possess your souls. And may "the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."†

SERMON XIX.

PROMISE OF STRENGTH AND PEACE.

The Lord will give Strength unto his People; the Lord will bless his People with Peace.—*Psalm* xxix. 11.

THE Bible abounds with "exceeding great and precious promises:"‡ and it is one part of a Minister's duty to make a right application of them. He must try to give the comfort which they contain, to those for whom it is intended; and to prevent others from taking it to themselves, and thus from "wresting the Scriptures to

* Malachi iii. 17. † Hebrews xiii. 20, 21.

their own destruction." To this end he is required not only to shew the *meaning* of any particular promise, on which he may choose to discourse, but also clearly to point out the *persons*, to whom the promise is given, and to whom therefore the comfort contained in it belongs. These are the objects, which I shall have in view, while I discourse on the promise in the text, "The Lord will give strength unto his People: the Lord will bless his People with Peace." I shall accordingly shew,

I. What is the Value of the Blessings here promised.

II. Who are the Lord's People, to whom these Blessings belong.

I. The Blessings here promised are two, Strength and Peace.—Let us consider them separately. "The Lord will give Strength unto his People." To estimate the value of this blessing, we must understand the need, which the Lord's People have of it; with how many powerful enemies they have to contend; and what utter weakness they have in themselves.

The Lord's People have to contend,

1. With the *Powers of Darkness.* They wrestle not "against flesh and blood," that is, against those only, but "against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Their "adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"* and if he failed not to assault the Lord himself when on earth, much less will he fail to assault his people, over whom he is so much more likely to prevail. These indeed are the chief objects of his attack. Over the rest of mankind, who are "the children of disobedience," "taken captive by him at his will,"† he rules with absolute dominion. But the Lord's people are, as it were, rebels against the government of Satan. They have escaped from his tyranny, and are setting his power at defiance. Against them, therefore, his utmost fury, malice, and subtilty are directed.

2. They have to contend with the World. The world is a continual snare to the people of God. In every view it is an enemy greatly to be dreaded. Its smiles and frowns, its promises and threatenings, are equally dan-

* Ephes. vi. 12. 1 Peter v. 8. † Ephes. ii 2. 2 Tim. ii. 26.

gerous to their peace and safety. It draws them from the path of duty by flattering prospects of pleasure, of wealth, of honour, of ease, or power. It strives to shake their firmness by the dread of poverty, shame, or persecution. If it fail of drawing them into compliance with its own evil maxims and practices, it regards and treats them as enemies. It represents them as hypocrites and deceivers; loads them with reproachful names; and holds them up as the objects of ridicule and scorn.

3. They have to contend with their own natural depravity, and with remaining sin in their hearts. This, while it proves their sorest enemy, shews the utter weakness they have in themselves. Assaulted at once by the world and the Devil, they have at the same time a traitor within, who secretly plots their ruin. By grace indeed they have received a new principle of spiritual life; but still the carnal principle is not entirely cast out. It is broken but not destroyed. It does not reign, as it once did: but it gives way unwillingly, and still struggles for the mastery. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." Still they "find, another law in their members warring against the law in their mind:"* so that "when they would do good, evil is present with them."

Such is the need, which they have of the promised blessing. And hence we may estimate its value. Surrounded as they are by dangerous enemies, assaulted from without, and from within, having no strength in themselves, what precious words are these, to the people of God, "The Lord will give *Strength* unto them!" He will make them "stronger than their enemies," and will not suffer their foes to prevail against them. He will "grant they may have power and strength to have victory and to triumph against the Devil, the world, and the flesh." Satan may "desire to have them, that he may sift them as wheat;" but "the Lord will pray for them, that their faith fail not."† The world may assault them with every powerful temptation; but they shall be "delivered from this present evil world."‡ Sin may occasionally hinder and distress them: but it "shall not have dominion over them."§ In all difficulties the Lord will

* Gal. v. 17. Rom. vii. 23. † Luke xxii. 31, 32. ‡ Gal. i. 4.
§ Rom. vi. 14.

stand by them, and strengthen them; will suit their grace to their need; will "not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able;"* will uphold them with his right hand on the bed of sickness, and at the hour of death: and will finally "keep them by his power through faith unto salvation."†

But the Lord will not only give strength unto his people he will also "bless them with *Peace.*" Peace is the great blessing of the Gospel. It is the legacy, which the Lord has left to his people. He said to his Disciples, when he was about to be taken from them, "Peace I leave with you: my Peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you."‡

What then is the Peace here meant?

In the first place it is *Peace with God.*—All men being born in sin, are "by nature children of wrath." They are "enemies to God by wicked works."§ Sin is directly opposed to all his glorious attributes, and justly provokes his displeasure and vengeance. So that sinners in their natural state can have no peace with God. But Christ brings his people into a state of peace. He heals the breach, which sin has made between them and God. By his Cross he has slain the enmity: and has reconciled them to God by his own blood. "The chastisement of their peace was upon him, and by his stripes they are healed."|| Their sins being laid on Christ their Surety, and the Divine Justice being fully appeased by his infinite sacrifice, God no longer regards them with wrath. His anger is turned away. He freely "accepts them in the beloved."¶ For Christ's sake he receives them into favour: gives to them a name and a place among his children; and bestows on them a title to heaven and to eternal life.

But this is not all. The Peace here meant,

In the second place, is *Peace of mind.* Without this inward peace, the blessing of peace with God, so far as the present life is concerned, would be little understood or valued. Sin brings with it guilt, and shame, and fear. And though conscience for a time may sleep under the

* 1 Cor. x. 3. † 1 Peter i. 5. ‡ John xiv. 27. § Ephes. ii. 3. Col. i. 21. || Isaiah liii. 5. ¶ Ephes. i. 6.

weight; yet when awakened, it will feel the burden to be intolerable. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" The sinner under a sense of unpardoned sin can know no peace. But Christ gives it to his people. He heals the wounded spirit and binds up the broken heart. He "speaks Peace unto his people and to his saints." He "gives to them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."* He leads them to rely with an humble confidence on his merits, mercies, and promises. He teaches them by faith to "behold Him as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He enables them through grace, to look up to God, no longer as an offended Judge, but as a reconciled and loving Father. Thus are their guilty fears removed. Thus is the burden taken away from their conscience. Fully convinced of the divine wisdom, goodness and mercy, they "commit their ways unto the Lord." They "cast all their care upon him," knowing that "he careth for them." In an humble hope that "all things shall work together for their" spiritual and eternal "good," they wait for the events, which may befall them here, with confidence and composure. Though they may be "troubled on every side," yet are they "not distressed;" though, "perplexed," yet "not in despair."† Death, which is so frightful an object to others, to them has lost its terrors. They look forward to it without dismay. They leave to the Lord both the time and the manner of their departure out of life. They see his hand, they own his wisdom, they submit to his will in every dispensation. In the darkest season of trial and affliction, they are yet enabled "in patience to possess their souls," and with even something of a triumphant air to say "We know whom we have believed."‡

Such is the Peace here meant: Peace of mind, arising from a sense of Peace with God. Such is the Peace, with which the Lord promises to bless his people. And who can fully estimate the value of this blessing? It must be felt in order to be known. It is that "Peace of God, which passeth all understanding:" that secret "joy with which a stranger doth not intermeddle;" that "love of

* Isaiah lxi. 3. † 2 Cor. iv. 8. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 12.

God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."*

Having thus endeavoured to point out the value of the blessings promised in the text, I shall now proceed.

II. To shew who are the Lord's People, to whom these blessings belong.

Many are the marks, which the Bible gives of the Lord's People. Indeed it seldom happens, but that the Promises themselves furnish us with some means of tracing out the persons, to whom alone they belong. Thus the Promise in the text, though it does not undertake to describe the people of the Lord, yet enables us with sufficient clearness to point out who they are. Are Strength and Peace the Blessings promised? Then the Lord's People are they, who value these blessings; who feel their need of them, and are earnestly seeking of Him an interest in them.

Man naturally feels no need of the Strength here promised. He is unconscious of the dangers with which he is beset, and of his own inability for meeting them. He has no knowledge of the many spiritual adversaries which are ever present with him, and are leaving no means untried of destroying his soul. As for the world, far from regarding it as an enemy of which he has just reason to be constantly afraid, he looks upon it with delight, and gives to it the first place in his heart. Instead of anxiously watching against the temptations, to which it daily exposes him, he embraces with eagerness its deceitful offers, and rushes without fear into the snares, which it spreads for him. Of his own heart he is equally ignorant. He flatters himself, that although, through the force of bad examples and the violence of evil passions, he may be sometimes drawn into sinful tempers and actions, yet at the bottom his heart is good. He is not, in his own idea, naturally and deeply corrupt. His intentions at least are upright. He can safely trust to his own resolutions, and has no fear but that all will end well at last. Persons thus secure and confident, must listen with indifference to the promise of spiritual strength. They cannot value it; for they feel no need of it, nor see in it any excellence.

* Philip. iv. 7. Prov. xiv. 10. Rom. v. 5.

Very different is the case with the Lord's people. They have been taught of God to see their danger, and to feel their weakness. They are "not altogether ignorant of Satan's devices;" of the delusions of the world; of the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Hence they value the Promise in the text. The Strength which it proposes to bestow, is the very thing of which they stand in need. Has the Lord promised to bestow it? To him they apply for it. They seek it of Him in humble and constant prayer. They wait upon him for it in all his appointed ordinances. Their earnest desire is to be "strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man," to be made "strong in the grace, that is in Christ Jesus:" and thus to be fitted for every good work.

Again, men naturally feel no need of spiritual Peace. Not being convinced of the guilt and misery of sin, they cannot estimate the value of this blessing. They have no knowledge of that awful breach, which sin has made between their soul and God. They think not of the dreadful curse, which disobedience to the divine commandments has brought upon them. They have lulled their conscience into a fatal sleep. If a doubt concerning their salvation sometimes arise, they soon get rid of it. What, though they have some faults; yet they have many pleasing qualities to make amends. They need not fear. "Soul, take thine ease eat, drink, and be merry." Puffed up with such high notions of themselves, they value not the offer of Peace. They have Peace already. Can they desire that, for which they feel no need?

But are such the feelings of the Lord's People? Is such their language? Are these their notions? Far otherwise. Their consciences have been awakened. Their eyes have been opened to see their real state. They have seen, that they are sinners. They have trembled at the thoughts of that misery which sin has brought upon them. They are convinced, that there can be no real happiness, but in the favour and love of God. They know, that without reconciliation with their offended Maker, they must for ever perish. Peace with Him is the blessing, for which they long. A sense of his forgiveness only can give peace to their hearts. With transport then they receive the promise in the text.—Will the Lord give Peace? What glorious

tidings! How exactly suited to their wants! 'Lord,' they cry, 'unworthy as we are, bestow on us this blessing. Reconcile us to thyself through the blood of thy cross. Put away our iniquities far from us. Grant to us a comfortable hope of our pardon and acceptance. Speak peace to our troubled souls. "Make us to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."'*

Such are the Lord's People. My brethren, have you reason to hope that you are of this happy number? Do you find on trial, that you possess those feelings, those dispositions and desires, which distinguish the persons, to whom this promise belongs? If there be but *one*, who answers to this description, it becomes the Minister of the Gospel to give to him all the comfort and encouragement, which this most precious promise is capable of giving. If there be but *one*, who, under a conviction of his own weakness and guilt, is humbly waiting upon Christ for Strength and Peace; and if he ask, '*To whom* these blessings are promised?" Let it be instantly replied, '*to Him*.'—"Thou art the man." To thee this promise is given. Through fear that thou art not one of the Lord's People, thou mayst perhaps distrust thy interest in the blessings. But distrust it not. If thou wert not one of the Lord's People, thou wouldst have no desire for these blessings. If the Lord had not given to thee a heart to seek Strength and Peace of Him though wouldst not be seeking them. And because thou seekest, thou shalt find. Be then of good cheer, "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." In thyself thou art weak and helpless, surrounded with many enemies, exposed to many trials, engaged in many conflicts. But fear not. The Lord will be thy strength. Let a sense of thy weakness lead thee to depend more humbly and entirely upon Him; and thou shalt experience the truth of the Apostle's words. "When I am weak, then I am strong."—The Lord "will also bless thee with *Peace*." He has already made thy peace with God; and if he have not already shed abroad a sense of it in thy heart; yet hereafter he will certainly do it. If thou canst not at present look up to God with a com-

* Psalm li. 8.

fortable persuasion of being at peace with him; yet tarry thou the Lord's leisure, and He will not leave thee comfortless. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord."* Be satisfied that all thy concerns are in the hands of infinite wisdom, mercy and love. The Lord best knows for what reason he delays to fulfil his word to thee. But in due time he will fulfil it. Sooner or later he "will restore comfort to the mourners." He "will extend peace to thee like a river." In the mean time, bear in mind the direction of the Prophet, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."†

But, my brethren, are there not some, whose consciences witness against them, that they are *not* seeking strength and peace from Jesus Christ? If this be your case; then you belong not to the Lord's People.—Consider the misery of such a state. You have clearly no interest in the glorious Blessings in the text. Without strength in yourselves, you have yet no precious promise of strength from the Lord. You have no security against the wiles of the Devil, the snares of the world, and the lusts of your own heart, "Taken captive by Satan at his will," you know not into what depths of wickedness you may at length be hurried. What pretensions then can you have to Peace? You may promise to yourselves Peace; but it is a deceitful hope. You may be crying "Peace to yourselves and may feel what you call Peace in your hearts. But it is not a Peace of the Lord's giving. It is a Peace arising from false security; a Peace which will end in everlasting shame and misery. It is a Peace, the fruit not of a pacified, but of an unfeeling conscience. Your conscience sleeps, and from thence you falsely conclude, that all is well within. Were it once awakened, it would utter different truths.—May it please the Lord to rouse you! May it please Him to strike conviction on your heart before you learn, in a manner too dreadful to be described, the value of those promised blessings, which you now despise; before you awake out of your present sleep in that place of tor-

* Hosea vi. 3. † Isaiah l. 10. lvii. 18. lxvi. 12.

ment, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!" There the door of mercy will be for ever shut. No further offers of Strength and Peace will there be given. "To-day, then, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts." Lay hold of the promised blessings, while yet there is opportunity allowed; while yet the Lord is waiting to be gracious; while yet his ministers are "praying you in his stead. Be ye reconciled to God."*

SERMON XX.

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING.

But who may abide the Day of his Coming? And who shall stand, when He appeareth?—*Malachi* iii. 2.

THE Coming of Christ is an event frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. But it is not always the same event, which is intended by this expression. In some places it means the First Coming of Christ into the world, his appearance in human nature. In other places it signifies his Second Coming at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead. It is the first of these events, to which the prophet chiefly refers in the text: but we may look upon the other as also included in it. And it is in this sense that I mean to understand the passage. I shall consider the Coming here spoken of as that Coming of Christ, which is yet to take place, his Second Coming to Judgment. In which view the question asked by the prophet, proposes to us a most solemn and important subject of enquiry. "Who may abide the Day of his Coming? And who shall stand, when He appeareth?"—I purpose, in discoursing on these words,

I. To remind you of some Particulars in the second Coming of Christ.

II. To answer the solemn Question here proposed.

I. Among the particulars, of which I shall remind you,

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

concerning the Second Coming of Christ, one is the *Certainty* of that event.

That Christ *will* come, is a point, on which we are not left to doubt and conjecture. We have the plainest testimony, which words can give. The Angels expressly told the Apostles, at the Ascension of Christ, that "the same Jesus, which had been taken up, from them into heaven, should so come, in like manner, as they had seen Him go into heaven."* Our Lord himself repeatedly spoke of his Second Coming: and all the Apostles, with one voice, proclaimed the same truth. St. Peter foretells, that there would arise in the world wicked men, who should deny this truth. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his Coming?" But to such presumptuous objectors the Apostle replies by positively declaring the *Certainty* of the event—"The Day of the Lord will come."†

The next particular, which I shall notice, is the *Manner* of Christ's Second Coming.

It will be glorious. The First Coming of Christ was in all outward meanness and humiliation. He was born in a stable; He was wrapped in swaddling clothes; He was laid in a manger. He came "not with observation." Far from being distinguished by worldly pomp and wealth, he had no share in the things of this world: He "had not even where to lay his head." He was despised, persecuted, crucified. But his Second Coming will be in glory. It is called "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour."‡ Sublime and magnificent are the descriptions given of this great event. "The Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him." He shall "come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." "He shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire." "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God." "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints."§

* Acts i. 2. † 2 Peter iii. 3, 4, 10. ‡ Titus ii. 13.

§ Matt. xxv. 31. xxiv. 30. 1 Thess. iv. 16. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. Jude 14.

His Coming shall be also sudden. Every moment, which passes by, is bringing it nearer. Yet we are told, that it will at last come, when men are not expecting its arrival. "The Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,"* unlooked for, and unthought of. We are frequently reminded of this truth in the Scriptures. Our Lord himself expressly says, that "in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh:"† while, in the following passage, he more particularly declares the same thing. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark: and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: even thus shall it be in the day, when the Son of Man is revealed."‡

To the Certainty and Manner of his coming, we may add, in the third place, the *Purpose* and the *Consequences* of it.

When Christ first came into the world, he tells us, that "He was come not to judge the world, but to save the world." In his state of humiliation he came as a Saviour. When He comes in glory, He will come in a different character. He will then come as a judge. He "will sit upon the throne of his glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations." He will come not to save, but to judge the world. Then indeed, in the words of the prophet immediately following the text, He will be "like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." He will separate the dross from the sterling gold. He will divide the chaff from the wheat, the goats from the sheep. He will make an awful and everlasting distinction between the righteous and the wicked; and, by his just sentence will assign to each the reward or the punishment to which they are entitled. He will condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

* 1 Thess. v. 2. † Matt. xxiv. 42. ‡ Luke xvii. 26—30.

He will crown the righteous with everlasting glory in the kingdom of his Father.

Having thus reminded you of some particulars concerning Christ's Second Coming, I shall now proceed,

II. To answer the solemn Question proposed to us in the text.

"Who may abide the Day of his Coming? And who shall stand, when He appeareth?" The meaning of this question is plain. "We must all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ:" but who among us will be able to bear that severe and close enquiry, which will then be made into our lives and characters? Who will stand with comfort, with confidence, with acceptance, in the presence of his heart-searching Judge, and will escape in that fearful Judgment? In answering this question, I shall shew, in the first place, who those are, that will *not* be able to "abide the Day of Christ's Coming, and to stand before Him, when He appeareth."

Among these we must first place every open and habitual sinner. The drunkard, the liar, the thief, the sabbath-breaker, the profane swearer, the impious scorner, the impure fornicator, the malicious, the envious, the revengeful man, the extortioner, and the oppressor: all these persons, and all such as these, will assuredly be unable to stand before Christ at his appearing. Whatever they may now think; by whatever excuses they may now silence the voice of conscience; whatever peace they may now feel; whatever security they may now promise to themselves in their iniquities; very different will be their thoughts and feelings, when they shall be called before the Judgment-Seat of Christ. They will then see how vain are their excuses; how vast is their guilt. Their boasted confidence will fail. Their tongues, which here spoke so stout against the Lord, will be speechless. Their hearts will tremble and melt like wax. Unable to abide the presence of the Lord, they will be overwhelmed with horrible confusion. In anguish of soul they will "say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him, that sitteth on the throne; and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"*

* Rev. vi. 16, 17.

To these persons we may add, secondly, the Worldly man: the man, who has made this world his God, and has set up his idols in the heart, "the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life." All his days he has been constantly engaged in pushing his worldly interests. His treasure has been upon earth. His affections have been set on things below. The main employment of his time, of his thoughts, and of his talents has been, how he may procure to himself a somewhat larger portion of worldly goods. Of such a man the world thinks favourably; and looks on him, it may be, with admiration and respect: for "the world will love its own;" and "men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself."* But what will become of such a man in "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" Will he be able to stand in that fearful Judgment? No. His idolatrous love of the world will then become his utter confusion. He will see his beloved Idol, the world and all things in it, consumed with fire: and glad will he be, could he perish in the same flames, rather than stand before the face of his offended Judge. But he *must* stand before the Judge? and receive sentence together with those, who "having served the creature more than the Creator" have "held the truth in unrighteousness," and when they knew God, "glorified him not as God."*

Let us turn, thirdly, to a person of another character, to the Hypocrite; to the man, who has outwardly the appearance of being religious, but is not really so within; who has the form of godliness, but is without the power of it; who calls himself the servant of Christ, while his "inward parts are very wickedness." Such characters, we may fear, are not uncommon in the world. At church they are outwardly godly and devout; but follow them home into their families, and see what marks of godliness you can find there. Is religion their business throughout the week, as well as their professed employment on the Sunday? Does it bring forth in them good fruit; Does it improve their tempers, amend their dispositions, or moderate their desires after worldly things? Does it lead them to deny themselves, to mortify their pride, to sub-

* Psalm xlvi. 18.

due their selfishness, to crucify the flesh? No. In all these respects they are no better than the openly irreligious. Will such persons then abide the day of Christ's Coming? Will they stand, when He appeareth? Alas! They may now flatter themselves that they shall endure that awful judgment: but their deceitful hopes will soon expire. The books will be opened, and the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Then shall the false professors of religion be detected and exposed. Their unmortified lusts, their unsubdued pride, their worldly spirit, their allowed secret wickedness, shall be produced against them. Their whole character shall be made known to men and angels, and they shall be condemned by the general voice of all, as hypocrites and unbelievers, to whom shall be weeping and wailing for ever.

Look next to another character; to the man, who is self-righteous and trusts to his own merits and strength, who talks of *the goodness of his heart;* says that he has *done no harm;* and in proud self-sufficiency "blesses himself," that he "is not as other men are." 'If,' he secretly whispers to himself, 'If I have some failings, yet they are but few; and are abundantly overbalanced by many pleasing and useful qualities. My intentions are sincere and upright. My conscience lays nothing to my charge. Surely I need not fear to stand before Christ in Judgment.' Such is now the presumptuous language of his soul. But will such be his language in the day of which we are speaking? Will he think and speak thus, when he shall really stand before Christ at his appearing? Far otherwise. He will be covered with shame and confusion. His mouth will be stopped. For the Book of the Law will be opened, the spiritual and holy Law of God: and tried by this rule, the deficiency of his fancied merit will be fully seen. His conduct, which he thought so praise-worthy, will be found in numberless instances to have been sinful: nay, in those very instances, in which it seemed to be most amiable, it will appear to have proceeded from selfish motives, and so to be defiled with sin. His heart, which he thought so good, will be shewn to have been a fountain of all uncleanness, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," utterly without humility, without faith in Jesus Christ, without love to

God and man, and filled with pride and selfishness, and evil passions. Exposed, confounded self-convicted, where shall he hide his guilty head? Whither shall he flee from his heart-searching Judge? How shall he escape the dreadful sentence, "Depart from me, thou worker of iniquity!"

But perhaps, my brethren, you begin to think, that we are carrying things too far. You are ready to say, that, according to this way of judging, we condemn all mankind; that not one is left, who shall abide the day of Christ's Coming, and shall stand, when He appeareth. But it is not so. There is another character to be described; the humble, penitent, believing Christian; a character, widely differing from every other, which has been drawn, and easily to be distinguished from them all.—He is not an open, nor an impenitent sinner. Whatever he may have formerly been, however deeply enslaved to sin, he is *now* a new creature in Christ Jesus. By the grace of the Gospel he has been brought to repent of his sins, to condemn himself on their account, and to forsake the practice of them.—He is not a worldly man. From a principle of conscience, and a sense of duty, he is attentive indeed to his worldly calling, and diligently performs the work committed to him. But his heart is not in these things. Defeat his worldly schemes; yet *his* hopes are not disappointed; for *they* are fixed on things above. Take away his worldly goods; yet *his* treasure is not touched; for *that* is placed in heaven. He lives not to the world, not to himself, but to God.—He is not an hypocrite. He does not wear a mask in the sight of man; nor under the cloak of a godly profession does he hide an ungodly heart. He is "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." His religion is not merely on the outside. His heart indeed is far from being perfect. Much remaining corruption still dwells within. But he watches, prays, and strives against it. Were it in his power, he would be holy, even as God is holy. That he still continues so unholy is a matter of most serious grief to him; while, amidst all his lamentations and complaints, the power of religion really gains ground in the heart, and shews its influence there, by purifying his affections, regulating his desires, improving his tempers, and by enabling him in every part of his conduct to bring forth

much fruit unto holiness.—He is not self-righteous, nor trusts to his own merits and strength. On the contrary, he has renounced himself. He has been too deeply convinced of his own guilt and weakness to rely, even for a single moment, on any thing in himself. His dependance is solely on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. It is Christ's righteousness, and not his own, in which he hopes to be found. It is the blood of Christ, to which he looks for the cleansing of his soul. It is the Grace of Christ, and the supply of his spirit, by which he hopes to withstand the enemies of his salvation, and to endure unto the end. His prayer, his constant prayer is "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, save me, I perish." His declaration is, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "By the grace of God I am, what I am."

Such is the real Christian. Such, my Brethren, is the man, "who *will* abide the day of the Lord's Coming, and *will* stand, when he appeareth." He indeed will not be able, any more than others, to stand on his own merits, to excuse his sins, or to justify his conduct. He will not be able any more than others, to plead innocence, to say, 'I have done no harm,' No. But he will have other grounds on which to place his confidence. He will claim an interest in the death of Christ his Saviour. His plea will be, "Who is he that condemneth: It is Christ that died."* His penitence, his uprightness, his secret striving with sin, his useful life, his godly motives, will be brought in evidence of the soundness and reality of his faith. The judge himself will own him as a friend; will claim him as one of his people, for whom he died; will stop the accuser's mouth; will fully acquit him of every charge; and will welcome him into the joy of his Lord.

I have thus answered the solemn Question in the text. I have shewn you *who* the person is, that with comfort, with confidence, and with acceptance, will stand before the Lord at his appearing.—It is the real Christian.—By way then of application let me remind you, that it is in the power of every one of us to become such a person as I have here described. We *may* all be real Christians. We may *all* have Jesus Christ for our friend and Saviour in the day of Judgment. He is now waiting to be gra-

* Rom. viii. 34.

cious. He is now inviting every sinner of every description to turn unto Him, and to accept his offers of free forgiveness. The open and profane transgressor, the worldly man, the long-dissembling hypocrite, the self-righteous Pharisee, are all alike included in his merciful invitations. He bids all to forsake their evil ways, and in true faith and repentance to come unto Him, and he will give them rest: he will give them peace now and confidence in the day of his appearing. He assures them that while others shall be overwhelmed with horrible fear before him at his coming, those who have fled to him for refuge, shall in that day lift up their heads with joy.

My brethren, may you have grace to lay these things to heart! Consider the *certainty* of Christ's Second Coming. He will surely come. Consider the *manner* of his Coming. You shall yourselves be witnesses of his glory: for "every eye shall see Him." You know not how soon he may come. You know not how suddenly you may be called before his judgment-seat. Consider the *consequences* of his Coming. He will come to fix you in everlasting happiness, or in eternal misery. Be ready then for his Coming. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. "Prepare to meet your God." Live under a constant expectation of his appearing: so that when he shall really appear, you may be enabled in that day to say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

* Isaiah xxv. 9.

SERMON XXI.

ON THE EFFICACY OF THE WORD OF GOD, AND ON THE WAY OF RECEIVING IT.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.—1 *Thessalonians* ii. 13.

WHILE those, who preach the Gospel, are answerable for the trust committed to them; those who hear it are not less answerable for the use which they make of this great privilege. While ministers are solemnly charged to "take heed unto their doctrine;" the people are not less solemnly warned to "take heed how they hear." In truth the word of God is not to be trifled with. It is either "the savour of life unto life;" or "the savour of death unto death." It must make us better; or it will leave us worse. If it does not raise us to heaven, it will sink us into deeper condemnation. Feeling then how greatly we are concerned in this matter, let us propose to ourselves the example of those Thessalonians, of whom St. Paul, in the text, speaks with so much satisfaction and comfort. He tells them that he "thanked God on their account, without ceasing:" and why? "Because" (he adds) "when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." He recollected that serious attention, with which they had listened to the preaching of the word of God, that ready submission, which they had yielded to its doctrines, and that exemplary obedience to its precepts, by which they had shewed its power on their hearts: and the recollection of these things, furnished him with a constant source of thankfulness and consolation under his many afflictions. Would God! that all who hear his word, would receive it in the same manner as these Thessalonians did: that they would

"receive it, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe!" With the view of stirring us up to follow this example, as well as of further explaining the subject, let us consider two things here suggested to us:

I. The Description given of the word.

II. The Manner in which it ought to be received.

I. The description here given of the word may be considered.

First as to its Author: *whose* word it is. It is not, says the Apostle, the word of men. Men are employed as instruments for making known the word; but it is not their own word, which they make known. The doctrines, which they teach, are "not cunningly devised fables" of human invention. The word is the word of God. It contains his message to mankind; reveals his will, and discovers his counsels, so far as he thinks fit to discover them. It is, says St. Paul in the text, "*in truth* the word of God." Such was the word, which he preached to the Thessalonians; as he calls it in another part of his Epistle, "The Gospel of God."* It had been revealed to him, as he tells the Galatians, by God himself. "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel, which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."†—Such was the word preached by all the Apostles of Christ. It was in the strictest sense, "the word of God." They were under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "who taught them all things, and brought all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them." So that according to his own declaration to them; "It was not they that spake, but the Spirit of their Father which spake in them."‡—Such also is the written word, contained in the Bible. It is "in truth the word of God." Men were employed to write it, but they wrote under the especial direction and guidance of the Holy Ghost. By his power they were kept from error. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God:" and "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."§ So

* 1 Thess. ii. 2. † Gal. i. 11, 12. ‡ Matt. x. 20. § 2 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Peter i. 21.

that the *written word* is as certainly the Word of God, as that preached by the Apostles themselves; and God as directly speaks to us in the Bible, as he spake to the Jews by the mouth of his Prophets.—The same also may be said of the word, now and at all times preached by the true Ministers of Christ. They indeed lay no claim to inspiration or to any extraordinary influence of the Spirit; but still so long as their preaching agrees with the written word of God; so long as the doctrine and precepts, which they teach, are either contained in Scripture, or are founded on it, or can fairly be drawn from it, the word which they preach, is "in truth the word of God." They are God's messengers to their fellow-creatures. They speak in his name. They sound forth his truths. And hence it may be justly said, in a lower sense indeed, but not in an improper use of the passage, that "the words which they speak are not theirs, but His, who sends them."

But the description here given of the word may be considered further as to its *effects*. "It effectually worketh in them that believe." God not only makes use of his word as the channel by which He reveals to us his will, but appoints it as his instrument, for quickening us when dead, and for "creating us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." There is a peculiar power which attends the word. The Lord pours out his Spirit with his word; and thus makes the word effectual in promoting his work of grace in the soul. St. Peter tells us that those "who have purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."* Hence the word of God is called in Scripture, "the Rod of his Strength. Hence the Lord enquires by his prophet Jeremiah, "Is not my word like as a fire? and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Hence David declares of the word of God, not only that it "enlightens the eyes, and maketh wise the simple," but also that it "converteth the soul."†

But to obtain clearer notions on this point, we may consider two respects in which the word effectually works in them that believe.

* 1 Peter i. 22, 23. † Psalm cx. 2. Jeremiah xxiii. 29. Psalm xix. 7.

1. In producing Conviction of sin.

Conviction of sin is the beginning of life in the soul. Our Saviour said of the Spirit, that when he should come he would "convince the world of sin:"* which means that by his secret work on the heart, he would cause men to see and feel their sins in a way, in which they had not seen and felt them before: and this effect he produces by the word of God; which is therefore called "the Sword of the Spirit;" that effectual instrument, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."† By this spiritual weapon a man's false peace is destroyed. Hitherto perhaps he has had a good opinion of his own heart. He has thought favourably of his merits and pretensions. Though he has confessed himself to be a sinner, yet he has never *felt* that he is one. He is offended at being told, that he is an enemy to God, and full of all evil. But through mercy he is brought under the faithful preaching of the Word. A divine influence attends the appointed instrument. It comes home with power to his heart. It begins with shaking his self-confidence: by degrees it opens to him his own sinful nature; brings to his remembrance many sins, which he had long forgotten; shews him how very far he is from being the righteous character, which he has supposed himself to be; teaches him to measure not only his actions, but even his words and thoughts by the pure standard of God's Law; sets before him the dreadful punishment threatened against sin; till at length, "convinced of all, judged of all," alarmed at his guilt and danger, he anxiously looks around for help, and cries; "What shall I do to be saved?"

And have *we* not at times felt something of the same effect? When we have heard the word, have not our consciences been disturbed? Has not a suspicion been raised in us, that we are more guilty, than we would willingly believe ourselves to be? Have we not been forced, as it were, to apply what has been said to ourselves, and have felt some serious alarm at our danger? Such

* John xvi. 8. † Ephes. vi. 17. Heb. iv. 12.

convictions, such alarms have been the working of God's Spirit on our souls. Hitherto perhaps we have resisted and stifled them. God grant, that it may not be always thus! God grant, that his word may so effectually fasten on our hearts, as to work in us genuine repentance and real faith!

But further, the word of God effectually worketh in them that believe.

2. In binding up the broken heart.—The same instrument, which gives the wound brings also the cure. The word of God, which convinces the soul of sin, reveals also a way in which that sin may be forgiven. It proclaims a gracious Saviour, whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." It sets before the convinced and trembling sinner a remedy exactly suited to his wants. It makes known to him the power, goodness, and sufficiency of Christ: the glory of his person as God and Man; the purpose of his coming into the world, to save sinners; the fulness of that atonement which he has made for sin on the Cross; that perfect righteousness, which he has wrought out for every believing soul; his merciful calls to the weary and the heavy-laden; and his readiness to receive and pardon, and cleanse every penitent sinner who comes to him. These great and seasonable truths are revealed in the word, while the Spirit effectually applies them to the heart. The sinner, burdened with a sense of guilt, receives with joy the tidings of a Saviour; listens with eagerness to the account of his power, grace, and goodness; longs to be found among the number of those, whom he came to save; calls earnestly upon him for mercy; is gradually taught to lay hold of his precious promises; in proportion as he simply trusts to him for grace and righteousness, finds his hopes revived; and thus, at length, obtains solid comfort, and is filled with peace and joy in believing.

And are there not some among us who can testify to this work also, of the Spirit on their own souls; who have felt the blessed influence of the word in binding up the broken heart, and in filling it with comfort and hope, with peace and joy? May the Lord grant us to abound more and more in these proofs of the efficacy of his word! May He greatly increase among us these glorious instances

of his grace and love, and send forth his Spirit to carry the word with life and power to every heart!

Such is the description here given of the word of God. We consider

II. In what manner it ought to be received.

It must be clear, that the word cannot be properly received unless it be received in a manner suitable to its character and importance. It was thus that the Thessalonians received it. The Apostle bears testimony to them, that they received it "not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God."—Thus, if we would receive it as we ought, must we receive it. If we hope to profit by the word, to give to it that reception, which it deserves, we must receive it as the *word of God*—This general direction contains several particulars, which may be shortly noticed.

1. To receive the word as the word of God, means that we receive it with *attention* and *reverence*. Does God indeed speak, and shall not man listen; *attentively* listen; *reverently* listen? The majesty and the perfections of Him who speaks, demand this of them. If the High and Lofty One, whose Throne is in heaven, who inhabiteth Eternity, so wonderfully stoops as to address himself to guilty, polluted, perishing sinners; the least, which He can expect, is that they should lend an attentive, a reverential ear to what He says. God himself frequently claims to be heard on this very ground, that He is "*the Lord*," who speaketh. Nor can any claim be better founded. He is the Lord who made us; the God, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways: The God, who, in an instant, can destroy both body and soul in hell. Surely then, when he humbles himself to speak to us, it may with reason be said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—But, my brethren, how seldom is this admonition obeyed. With how little attention, with how little reverence is the word of God often heard in this favoured land! How many persons are there, who never read the written word, and who seldom put themselves in the way of hearing it preached! How many persons are there, who, when sitting in God's house, listen to his word read and preached with a stupid indifference and an ungodly unconcern: who suffer their

thoughts to be wholly fixed on other things; and while they profess to hear the truths of Scripture, are inwardly turning a deaf ear to all that is said!—Surely this is not to receive the word as *the word of God*. Can we wonder that few reap any lasting profit from the ministry of the Gospel, when they listen to it with minds so senseless and hardened; so little touched by a sense of the Presence and Majesty of Him, whose word they are called to hear!

2. The general direction before us means that we receive the word with *humility* and *teachableness*. It is God who speaketh. Does it become us to cavil at his word? God is infinitely wise and knoweth all things. He is true and faithful and cannot deceive. Shall we then be so absurd, so impious as to object to any revelations, which He is pleased in mercy to vouchsafe to us! Shall we say 'This doctrine cannot be true, for I cannot understand it.'—'This command cannot be right, for I cannot see the reason of it?'—True it is that there may be many things in Scripture, which we can neither explain nor understand. But instead of being surprised that this is the case; we might rather have wondered had it been otherwise: for God's thoughts and ways are far above ours. The answer to every objection is this: 'God has said it. What further proof can I require? It is *His* word: therefore I give full credit to it!' It is on this ground that God himself demands our faith and obedience. He does not say: 'Believe this truth, because *you see* it to be true: but because *I tell* you that it is so'—'Obey this precept, not because *you perceive the reason* of it; but because *I enjoin it*.'—To receive then the word as the word of God, is to receive it with an humble mind; with a disposition to believe and obey it, on the authority of Him, whose word it is: with a full conviction that whatever is either plainly revealed in it, or justly to be drawn from it, is most certainly true; whatever objections may *appear* to us to lie against it. This is the disposition which St. James recommends, when he directs us to "receive with *meekness* the engrafted word:"* and without thus receiving it, we can neither benefit ourselves, nor glorify God: nay, we dishonour him and shall surely ruin our own souls.

* James i. 21.

3. To receive the word as the word of God means, that we receive it as *his appointed instrument* for the conversion and edification of our souls. We have seen that the Word effectually worketh in them that believe. We have seen what are the effects, which it is intended to produce. Do we look to it to produce these effects on ourselves? Do we read and hear the Word of God with a real desire that it may effectually work in our hearts, and produce in us true repentance and genuine faith? To this end do we offer up our supplications at the throne of Grace, that God would be pleased to bless his Word to our conviction and comfort? Do we pray that He would make it powerful for awakening our consciences, for discovering to us our sins, and for bringing us to Christ?— One reason why men *receive* so little profit from the Word, is that they *expect* so little. They do not consider it to be "(as it is in truth) the Word of God." They regard it merely as intended to convey instruction to the understanding, not as the appointed instrument for converting the heart. Hence they do not pray to feel its saving influence on their souls. They do not pray for the Spirit to accompany the word and to mix it with faith in their hearts. My brethren, if we did but pray more constantly and earnestly for God's blessing on what we hear and read, we should soon find a blessed work within, to which, it is to be feared, that some, as yet are strangers. If we did but seek to derive more benefit from the word, we should soon experience more. If we did but receive it as the word of God, we should surely find it to be His word, by its powerful efficacy on our souls. That all of us may thus receive and find it, God of his infinite mercy grant for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON XXII.

JESUS CHRIST, THE ONE GREAT SACRIFICE FOR SIN.

Without shedding of blood is no remission.—*Hebrews* ix. 22.

THE chief design of St. Paul in this Epistle was to point out to the Jews the real meaning of their sacrifices; and so to lead them to Christ, the One great Sacrifice for sin. With this view having reminded them of the continual use of blood in almost every part of their religious worship, he adds in the words of the text, "without shedding of blood is no remission." This is a truth, which the whole Jewish Religion taught; which the whole history of man, as set before us in the Scriptures, teaches; and which I now purpose to explain and apply.

To which end, I shall endeavour

I. To establish the fact, that in all ages of the world, the revealed and acceptable way of the sinner's drawing near to God, has been by "*the shedding of blood.*"

II. To shew what the Fact, thus established, proves.

It must be granted that we have no express account of the appointment of Sacrifices from the beginning, nor of the exact manner in which Adam, as a sinner, was taught to draw nigh unto God. But we read in the third chapter of Genesis, that "unto Adam and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."* Now it is certain that the beasts, from which these skins were taken, were not slain for purposes of food; because before the flood no leave to feed on the flesh of animals was given. It is therefore *probable*, that they were slain for sacrifices; and that Adam was thus taught in this significant manner to express his belief of the great truth, revealed to him under the first promise of a Saviour, that "without shedding of blood was no remission." This probability is greatly increased by finding, that within a few years after, the offering of animals was a distinguishing part of that way of worshipping God, which He accepted. "In process of time, it came to pass, that Cain

* Genesis iii. 21.

brought *of the fruit of the ground*, an offering unto the Lord : and Abel, he also brought of the *firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.* And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering, He had not respect*."

But the history of Noah furnishes a more decisive proof to the point in question. In the directions given to the Patriarch, before his entering into the ark, the division of animals into *clean* and *unclean*, strongly intimates, that the offering of animals, was a usual and an appointed way of worshipping God. For since, as was observed above, animals were not then used for food, on what other account, except on that of their being used for sacrifices, could such a distinction have been made? In this view *clean* beasts were such as were appointed for sacrifice ; and hence for this reason a greater number of these were preserved in the Ark, than of the other kinds. "Of every *clean* beast, thou shall take to thee by *sevens*, the male and his female ; but of beasts that are *not clean* by two, the male and his female†."

What is said of Noah immediately on his coming out of the Ark? He built an Altar unto the Lord, and took of every *clean* beast, and of every *clean* fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the Altar."—And how was this act of worship, accepted? "The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake‡."

At this time it pleased the Almighty to make a further grant to men, and to permit them to make use of animal food. But in the very terms in which this grant was given, there is something particularly suited to our present subject. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things: but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat§." The flesh was allowed to be eaten, but the *blood* was forbidden. What was the chief reason of this prohibition? A passage in the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, where this prohibition is repeated, expressly mentions the reason. "Whatsoever

* Genesis iv. 3, 4. † Genesis vii. 2. ‡ Genesis viii. 20, 21.
§ Genesis ix. 3, 4.

man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers, which sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul, that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people." Now mark the reason: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."—Hence it was, that the blood was to be regarded with peculiar reverence and awe.

Look next at the example of Abraham. In what manner did this Father of the Faithful, this Friend of God, conduct his religious worship? We are told, that he "*built an altar unto the Lord*, and called upon the name of the Lord*."—But especially, let us notice the account of that memorable transaction, which is related in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. Every circumstance in it strongly confirms, with respect to Abraham, the fact which I am endeavouring to establish. The command, which he received to offer up his son for a burnt-offering; the preparations, which he made for obeying the command; the language, in which he spake to his servants: "The Lad and I will go yonder and *worship*;" the discourse, which passed between him and Isaac on the way; and lastly, the offering up of a ram caught in the thicket, for a burnt-offering instead of his son;—these particulars fully prove, that Abraham was *accustomed* to the offering of Sacrifices. The practice of worshipping God by burnt-offerings was familiar to him: a practice, with which he was well acquainted.

Such also was the manner, in which Jacob worshipped God. At Sichem, at Bethel, he built an altar unto the Lord: and before his going down into Egypt, it is expressly said, that he "went unto Beersheba and offered sacrifices unto the God of his Father Isaac†."

It is to be observed that the instances, already mentioned, happened some hundred years before the giving of the Jewish Law from Mount Sinai. And in the same class we may also place the example of Job. At what time Job lived is not precisely known, but it is generally admitted that he had no knowledge of the Jewish cere-

* Genesis xii. 8. † Genesis xlvi. 1.

monial Law; and indeed it is probable, that he lived before that Law was given. Yet we find *him* also acting on the belief, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." For we read in the first chapter at the fifth verse, that Job offered burnt-offerings according to the number of all his children: for he said; "It may be that my sons have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Now let all these things be put together. Let us consider them attentively: and then say, what is the impression left upon the mind? We see Abel and Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Job; we see these illustrious characters, these eminent servants of God, worshipping him with shedding of blood; with sacrifices and burnt-offerings; and can we doubt whether this way of worship were not revealed at first, by God himself? To what other cause can we so reasonably assign the universal prevalence of Sacrifices, in almost all ages and countries of the world; as to the supposition of a revelation at first given by God, that such was the manner in which only He was to be approached by sinners on a throne of mercy?

But God was pleased to make a still clearer revelation of his will in this respect, to one nation in the world. He chose the family of Abraham to be a peculiar people to Himself. He delivered them from Egypt. He brought them to Mount Sinai. He made a Covenant with them; gave to them Laws, and Statutes, and Judgments; and taught them in what manner they should worship him with favour and acceptance. And how was this to be done? By sacrifices and burnt-offerings and in shedding of blood. The whole Jewish Law teaches most plainly, that "without shedding of blood, is no remission." To enter into particulars would go far beyond the limits of the present occasion; but if we turn for proof to the Book of Leviticus, we shall find, that "almost all things, by the Law, were purged with blood." Yearly, daily sacrifices were appointed to be offered up for the people. The Priests themselves could not draw near to God without a sacrifice. Every offence was to be expiated by a sin-offering. It was not enough that the offender should confess his sin and be sorry for it; but he must bring a

bullock, or a lamb, or a turtle-dove, whose blood was to be shed for an atonement. It was with blood that the book of the Law, the people, the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry were to be sprinkled: while the most dreadful threatenings of vengeance were denounced against such as despised this mode of approaching God, and presumed to worship Him in any other way. Thus every thing proclaimed the awful truth, "that without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Having thus endeavoured to establish the Fact, I now proceed,

II. To shew, what the Fact, thus established, proves.

It proves most clearly, that from the first entrance of sin into the world there has been but one way of salvation for sinners; but one way, in which they could approach and worship God with acceptance; namely, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.—That the offering of innocent animals did not in itself make any real atonement for sin is a point, which must be readily granted. St. Paul in this Epistle justly argues, that the *frequent offering* of the Jewish Sacrifices shewed that they did not make the comers thereunto perfect: "For then," he asks, "would they not have *ceased* to be offered? Because the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sin every year." Nay, having proved this point, he goes still further; and asserts, that such sacrifices not only *did* not but in the very nature of things *could* not, make any real atonement; "for," he adds, "it is not *possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin*."—The very design of an atonement, was to preserve the glory of the divine perfections, and to shew, that God, even in the very act of pardoning the sinner, was a just and holy God. But there was nothing in the blood of bulls and of goats, which could shew this awful truth. Had millions and millions of animals been slain, as a sacrifice for sinners; yet the righteousness of God would not have been made known by such a sacrifice. There was nothing in the shedding of their blood, which could

* Heb. x. 1—4.

shew forth the holiness of the divine character, God's hatred of sin, and the honour which he puts upon his law.

But if this be the case; if the death of animals did not, and could not, of itself, take away sin, what end did it answer? Why was the offering of sacrifices the appointed, the acceptable mode of worshipping God, if these sacrifices had no real virtue in themselves, and could do nothing towards taking away guilt, and purging the conscience from dead works? There can be only one answer. These sacrifices were types or representations of Christ. We are indeed expressly told, that "the Law was a shadow of good things to come:" And hence St. Paul affirms Christ to be "our Passover, who was sacrificed for us*." The blood of the numberless animals, which were slain, was typical of the blood of Christ; and was intended to shadow forth the great and available Sacrifice of the Son of God, and thus to lead forward the views of the offerers to Him, who was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;"—"The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world†."—It cannot indeed be affirmed that all the offerers, who joined in the sacrifices, used them in their typical meaning. That natural disposition, which leads men to place any thing in the room of true religion, would doubtless lead numbers to join in the appointed form of worship without any spiritual feeling, or faith in the promised Saviour. As persons, at this day, make a profession of their faith in Christ, and outwardly conform to the institutions of his religion, while in their hearts, they have no real dependance on his merits and intercession for taking away their guilt; so doubtless, many would then bring their bullocks and their lambs, and would offer the prescribed sacrifices, while they looked not forward to the precious blood of Christ, which the blood of their sacrifices represented: and it was this proneness to rest in the performance of the outward ceremonies, this profane use of the sacrifices without any suitable feelings in the heart, which was so frequently reproved and condemned by the prophets. But on the other hand, that the true spiritual worshippers of God did really offer these sacrifices with an eye to the atoning

* 1 Cor. v. 7. † Rev. xiii. 8. John i. 29.

blood of Christ, as the promised "seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head," we have very substantial proof. We are directly told, that "by *faith* Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Our Lord expressly says, that "Abraham rejoiced to see *his* day, and he saw it and was glad." We are informed that Moses "esteemed the reproach of *Christ*, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*." And with respect to David, so abundantly does he speak in the Psalms, of the sufferings and glory of Christ, that we can have no doubt of his looking forward by faith to the Messiah, though his knowledge of him might be less clear and distinct than ours. Job expressly declares, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth†." Nor are we to consider these instances, as rare and singular cases; but as examples of the faith, the views, the sentiments of all those, who before the coming of Christ in the flesh, worshipped God in spirit and in truth. They all looked forward to Christ. as the promised Saviour, whose blood only could take away their sins. Thus in every age, the way of salvation has been the same. The only difference has been this. The people of God, in former times, looked forward to a Saviour, who should come into the world. *We* now look back on one, who has come. They trusted for remission of sins to the blood which in after times should be shed. We trust for pardon to the blood which *has* been already shed. They were taught to shew their faith in the Sacrifice which *was to be made*, by the offering of animals and the shedding of blood. We are taught to declare our trust in the sacrifice which *has been* made, by the eating of bread, and the drinking of wine. Still, under both dispensations Christ is all in all. Under both, the same truth is taught; the same profession is made; the same fact is established; that, "without shedding of blood," the blood, not of bulls and of goats, but "the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," there is no remission.

In shortly applying this subject,

1. Let us be reminded of the great obligations which

* Heb. xi. 4. John viii. 56. Heb. xi. 26.
† Job xix. 25.

we are under to bless and praise God for the clearer light under which we live. "Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things, which we see, and have not seen them." Those truths, which they saw afar off, are brought nigh to us. What was taught to them by types and shadows, is plainly revealed to us. The vail is drawn aside; and compared with them, *we* see "face to face." We know far more of that precious blood-shedding, than they knew. We know distinctly *whose* blood it was, and *how* it was shed.—But then, let us remember, my brethren, that to whom God has given much, of them he will require the more. If he have favoured us with clearer light, he expects from us a suitable improvement. Less excuse can be made for us, if we neglect the salvation of the Gospel. Nay what excuse can be made for us ?. "If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God."

2. Let us direct our attention to the great truth, which we have been considering: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." We have all a great work upon our hands, the salvation of our immortal souls. We have to make our peace with God, to procure the forgiveness of our numerous sins—But there is no forgiveness of sins except through the Sacrifice of Christ. It is the blood of Jesus only, which cleanseth from sin, and which alone can purify our guilty souls. Let us beware then how we presume to seek forgiveness in any other way. Men make to themselves many saviours, which they put in the place of Christ. Ask them on what grounds they hope to be forgiven. They will tell you, because they repent of their sins; because they are sorry for them; because they have left off some bad habits; because they have done some good actions; because their conduct is in general decent and moral; because they are regular in discharging religious duties. But these things are not saviours. They indeed accompany salvation, but they cannot take away sin. They cannot reconcile us to God. It is only by the blood of Jesus, that we are brought nigh. Without an interest in his blood there is no remission. Here then let our peace be sought, where only it can be found. Let us seek it in the blood of

Jesus. Let us have our hearts and consciences sprinkled with this blood. So shall we be safe from the destroying angel.—For let us remember,

3. That as "without shedding of blood there is no remission;" so through the precious blood-shedding of Jesus there is full remission for every sin. Perhaps we tremble at the thought of our sins. The sight of them fills us with alarm. We are ready to conclude that they can never be blotted out. But let us not despair. There is power in the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin. Let us wash in this fountain, and though our "sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This is the Gospel, which is to be preached to every creature. It is preached this day to us. May we embrace it and be saved!

Lastly, let us also remember, that while through the precious blood-shedding of Christ, there is full forgiveness provided for all sin; yet it is sin confessed, lamented, and forsaken, to which alone, this forgiveness will really be granted. Christ has not died to save us *in* our sins, but *from* them. None but the truly penitent will have an interest in his atoning sacrifice; for none but the truly penitent will, in fact, apply to him for pardon. Sinners, who continue impenitent, do not believe in Jesus, consequently there is no remission for them. Let us then take heed, lest we deceive ourselves. Let us not suppose, while we wilfully retain the practice of sin in our lives, or the love of it in our hearts, that we can have any scriptural hope in Christ. Let us shew that we indeed belong to him, and have washed our garments in the blood of the Lamb, by "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

SERMON XXIII.

ON RECEIVING THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN.

We then as Workers together with Him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.—2 *Corinthians* vi. 1.

WE are here reminded of the office and employment of the ministers of the Gospel. They are "Workers together with God:" they are his instruments for bringing sinners to salvation. They are commissioned to publish the glad tidings of the Gospel, and to "beseech men not to receive this grace in vain;" while the Lord accompanies their preaching with his Spirit, and so blesses his word for "converting the soul, and making wise the simple." Thus he works *by* his ministers and *with* them. The power, grace and glory are his. All their sufficiency is of him. Of themselves they can neither think nor do any thing that is good. But still without them he seldom carries on the work of grace in the soul; and thus puts honour on the office, which he has himself appointed, "We then, as Workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." In discoursing on these words I shall endeavour

I. To shew what is meant by receiving God's grace in vain.

II. To dissuade you from receiving it thus.

I. Grace in its strict and proper sense means *undeserved favour:* a gift freely bestowed, without any respect to merit in the person, to whom it is given, (for as the Apostle argues "otherwise grace is no more grace*") and springing solely from the compassion and kindness of the Giver. By the "grace of God" in the text, we are to understand the *Gospel*, or that rich provision of unmerited mercy, which God has made known to us through his Son Jesus Christ. Now this Gospel is altogether of grace. It was wholly unmerited by man. It was freely bestowed on him. God, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," sent

* Romans xi. 6.

his Son to be our Saviour. Hence the Gospel is called "the Gospel of the grace of God;" and we are expressly said "to be saved by grace."—To *receive* this grace, is to receive the offers of it; to have the Gospel preached to us; to have the rich provision which it contains for our perishing souls, set before us.—To receive this grace *in vain*, is to hear the Gospel to no purpose; to slight the mercies of God; and so far as we are concerned, to defeat the gracious design for which he sent his Son into the world. Now there are several ways, in which men may thus be guilty of "receiving the grace of God in vain."

1. They are liable to this charge, when they take no care of their souls, and are utterly negligent of the great work of religion. The "grace of God" is intended to bring men to the knowledge, fear and love of him. The awful truths set before us in the Gospel are designed to awaken our minds to the important concerns of eternity; to inspire us with a sense of the value of unseen things; to lead us to a dread of provoking God's displeasure; and to encourage us to seek his favour and render to him a willing obedience. But when persons hear the Gospel without its producing in them these effects; when they live under the light of christianity, and yet still continue in darkness, unmindful of God, of their souls, and of eternity; when notwithstanding "that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance," they yet remain impenitent: in this case they clearly "receive the grace of God in vain." They are in no respect better for that rich offer of mercy, which God has made in the Gospel. So far as they are benefited or influenced by this offer, it might never have been made. Whether Christ have died for them, or not; whether God's arms be open to receive them or not, makes no difference to them; they are still earthly, carnal, sensual. The world is followed; their lusts are served; the devil is obeyed. God warns, threatens, entreats them, to no purpose. They turn a deaf ear to all his words; they slight his mercy, and dishonour his Son.

2. They also are guilty of "receiving the grace of God in vain," who while they profess to embrace the Gospel, yet are not seeking to be "justified by faith

without the deeds of the law." The doctrine of justification by faith only, is that peculiar doctrine of the Gospel, in which the grace of God most illustriously shines forth. We read that we are "justified freely by his grace;" and St. Paul in another place, calls a justified state; "*this grace* wherein we stand" and into which "we have access by faith."* It is the grand glory of the Gospel, that it provides a way in which God can be just, and at the same time, the justifier of the sinner; a way, in which without impeaching his own honour, he can pardon the chief of sinners, and can account those to be righteous before him, who in themselves are not so. Now this way is through the sufferings and obedience unto death of his incarnate Son; who is "of God made unto us righteousness," "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." In other words, whosoever utterly renouncing his own righteousness, is willing to accept the gift of righteousness freely put to his account; and to this end from the heart believes on Jesus Christ; he shall be accepted and treated as righteous: "being justified by faith he shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ."—Should any one then refuse this gift of righteousness; or, which is the same thing, should he think of justifying himself by his own works, of standing before God in "his own righteousness, the righteousness which is by the law;" such a person would receive the grace of God in vain. He would make the rich mercy offered in the Gospel of no effect to *him*. That this was St. Paul's view of the subject we can have no doubt; for he expressly says to the Galatians, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified" (that is, seek to be justified, or think that you are justified) "by the law: ye are fallen *from grace*." And speaking of himself he says. I do not *frustrate* the grace of God," that is, I do not make it void and of no effect; which he would have done, had he sought righteousness by the law; "for" (as he adds) "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."†

3. Those also are liable to the charge of "receiving the grace of God in vain," who though they profess to believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness, yet are not

* Romans iii. 24.—v. 2. † Gal. iv. 4.—ii. 21

careful to bring forth in their hearts and lives the fruits of righteousness. The Gospel is intended to work for us not only a deliverance from condemnation, but also a renewal of our nature. It is intended to change our hearts and subdue our corruptions, as well as to free us from punishment and to justify our persons. Thus it is said that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*." The grace of God *teaches* us to do these things: not only commands us to do them, and shews the necessity of our doing them; but also instructs us *how* to do them, and provides us with strength (if we will duly seek it) to enable us to do them. If then, notwithstanding this instruction and provision we do *not* these things; if, notwithstanding our profession of faith in Christ, we do *not* deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and do *not* live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world; in what respects are we better for that grace, which God hath vouchsafed to us? So far as we are concerned, it bringeth salvation *in vain;* it has appeared *in vain;* we have received it *in vain;* and *in vain* we shall continue to receive it, till we suffer it to produce in us its proper and natural fruits by purifying our hearts, and leading us to walk in newness of life. If men can so miserably deceive themselves as to suppose that a barren profession of *belief* in Christ is all which religion requires of them, they shew indeed most plainly, that the faith, which they pretend to have is no faith, and that the light within them is darkness.

4. Another way in which men receive the grace of God in vain, is by failing to keep the ground which they have gained, and so by falling back into perdition. To what purpose have they "escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, if afterwards they are again entangled therein and overcome?" To what purpose have they seemingly gone forwards in the way of life, if afterwards they cease their exertions, and having begun in the spirit, at last end in the flesh? They who run in a race with the hope of win-

* Titus ii. 11, 12.

ning the prize, must continue to run till they reach the goal. If they stop by the way, they have run so far in vain. It is thus in the Christian race. We have received grace *in vain*, if satisfied with "those things which are behind, we reach not forth unto those things, which are before, nor press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We have received grace *in vain*, if, "after we have known the way of righteousness, we turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us." And yet, how many it is to be feared, there are, who having thus "put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck:" who, "having once put their hand to the plough, look back," and by degrees return with increased guilt to their former sins: "whose latter end is worse than the beginning"—Surely such receive the grace of God in vain.

Having thus shewn what is meant by this expression in the text, and having pointed out some of the ways in which men may be guilty of the charge contained in it, I shall now endeavour

II. To *disssuade* you from thus receiving the grace of God in vain.

In entering on this part of my office, I know and feel the utter impossibility of prevailing with you any further, than that it may please God to bless the attempt. May he then on this occasion work *with* me, and *by* me; that while I pray you in his stead, not to receive his grace in vain, he may so incline your hearts, that I may not speak in vain!

In the first place, my brethren, let me remind you, that it is the *grace of God*, which you are urged to receive; the "Gospel of his grace;" the richest mercy, which the most merciful God can offer to you: mercy provided by infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; mercy, purchased at an inestimable price, even the precious blood of the Son of God; mercy, into which the angels desire to look; and which will for ever fill the heavenly world with praise and admiration. Surely there must be something in such mercy, which powerfully demands your acceptance; which loudly calls on you to beware, lest you receive this grace in vain. How will you answer it

to yourselves, if you refuse a gift, which comes thus strongly recommended, and in so forcible a manner claims to be received?

But remember farther, it is not to yourselves only, that you will have to answer for this conduct; you must answer also to God for the affront, which you put upon him. How could God more clearly have showed his wonderful loving-kindness towards us, than by sending his Son to be our Saviour, and by freely offering to us pardon, righteousness, and eternal life through him? How then can we more directly affront God, than by rejecting his offers and refusing to be benefited by them? It is as much as to say, 'We despise God's mercy, and have no need of his favour. Though he call us, we will not hear. Though he invite us, we will not come. Though he offer to us his grace, we will not accept it. At a great expense to himself, even with the blood of his only begotten Son, he has provided salvation for us: but we value not salvation. We will set at nought all his counsel and will have none of his reproof.' What, I ask, can be more affronting to the Almighty, than such language? Yet, such in fact, is the language of all those, who "receive the grace of God in vain." And what aggravated guilt and misery are they bringing upon themselves! "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace* ?"

In the next place, let me admonish those, who are now receiving the grace of God in vain, of the secret grounds and motives of their conduct. *Why* are you acting thus? *Why* are you thus affronting God and bringing guilt and misery on yourselves? Because you love sin and are devoted to earthly and sensual things. You are either too proud to submit to the humbling truths of the Gospel, or too fond of the world and the flesh to renounce them for Christ's sake. Whatever you may suppose, this is really the cause of your rejection of the Gospel. The self-denial, the mortification of sin, the renouncing of worldly and fleshly lusts, which the Gospel enjoins, on all who truly receive it, these are painful operations,

* Hebrews x. 29.

which you have no mind to undergo. You have a high opinion of your own merits: therefore you cannot stoop so low as to be saved "by grace through faith." You place your satisfaction, and look for your happiness in worldly and fleshly enjoyments: therefore you are unwilling to part with them. And hence it comes to pass, that through the love of these things, and from their secret power on your heart, you are receiving the grace of God in vain.—But, my brethren, for one moment, seriously think on what you are doing. Think on the worthlessness of those things, for the sake of which you are provoking God, and neglecting so great salvation. "The pleasures of sin are but for a season." "The things which are seen, are temporal." The world, and all things in it, will in a short time be burnt up. But your enjoyment of them will not last even during that short time. You will very soon be torn away from them. Nor even while you remain here, will your happiness in them be complete. You are daily subject to numberless unforeseen interruptions in your schemes of worldly happiness. Pain and sickness, trouble and disappointment are evils, which, every day may break in upon your earthly comforts, and spoil all your sensual enjoyments. And it is for these comforts, for these enjoyments, that you slight and reject the grace of God, which, if heartily received, will make you truly happy here, as well as hereafter?

For, in the last place, consider what must be the certain end of persisting in this rejection of the Gospel. You will assuredly wish at last, that you had not thus received the grace of God in vain: for the consequence must be unavoidable destruction. No hope, no way, no possibility of escape remains. They, who reject the Gospel of God, or, which is the same thing, receive his grace in vain, *must* perish; for nothing but this grace can save the body and soul from everlasting death. Without it there can be no pardon for sin; no renewal of the heart; no fitness for heavenly happiness; no victory over sin and Satan; no triumph over death and the grave; no title to eternal life and glory. All these great blessings are contained in the grace thus offered to you. If you receive it in vain, you lose them all, and you lose them all for ever. There is no way in which you can be pardoned, sanctified and glorified, but by the grace of the Gospel. What then

must become of you? Rejecting the counsel of God against yourselves, "nothing remains for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall destroy the adversary." Having neglected to improve the opportunity vouchsafed to you for working out your salvation, you must be left to the consequences of your sin. You must be condemned as incorrigible enemies to God, and cast into that lake of fire, which he has prepared for the devil and his angels.

Let me then, as a worker together with God, beseech you, brethren, by the riches of divine mercy; by the love of Christ; by the value of your never dying souls; by the hope of glory; by the weeping and gnashing of teeth: which awaits the slothful and wicked servant; that "ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Use the means; embrace the opportunity; improve the privileges so freely, so graciously bestowed upon you. Let not the Lord "spread out his hand, all the day, unto a rebellious people." Let him not say of you, "I called, but they refused. I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded." Close with his offer. Accept his grace. Yield yourselves to him as willing subjects. Delay not to do it. Take notice of the words, which follow the text. "Behold *now* is the accepted time: behold *now* is the day of sa vation." May this be the accepted time! May this be the day of salvation to us for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ!

SERMON XXIV.

THE GRAND DIRECTION AND PROMISE OF THE GOSPEL.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.
Acts xvi. 31.

THIS was the answer, which St. Paul gave to the affrighted Jailer at Philippi, when under a sense of his guilt and danger he anxiously enquired, "What shall I do to be saved?" The question, we must allow, was most

important. It was in fact, the same as if he had asked; 'How shall I escape the dreadful punishment which my sins deserve?' My brethren, have we not all need to ask the same question? Surely if we know aright our guilt and danger, we shall every one of us enquire as anxiously, as this self-convicted sinner did; "What shall I do to be saved?" And to every one who asks this question the same answer must be given; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." These words, indeed, contain the sum and substance of the Gospel; and therefore demand universal attention. We may consider them as setting before us two things.

I. The *grand direction* of the Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

II. The *grand promise* of the Gospel, "Thou shalt be saved."

I. The Gospel is a covenant of mercy. Man when he was first created, had no need of mercy; for he was not a sinner. He was then under the covenant of works; that is, he was promised life upon his obedience: "This do and thou shalt live." But when he had once broken the divine commandment, this covenant was at an end for ever. He was no longer promised life on his obedience; because obedience was no longer in his power. He was become wicked and unwilling to obey God's law. And indeed, if this had not been the case, if he had still been capable of doing his whole duty for the time to come, yet future obedience would not make amends for past disobedience. He was now a sinner: as such he had lost the promise of eternal life; and by no doings of his own could recover it. But then it was that mercy interposed. Then it was that God made known the Gospel. He graciously disclosed another way of obtaining eternal life, in the room of that which had been lost. He revealed the covenant of grace. He promised to Adam a Saviour, by believing in whom both he and his posterity might be saved. From this time then salvation has been, not of works, but of faith. The kingdom of heaven has been opened to all believers: not to those, who try to make themselves righteous; but to those, who by faith accept the righteousness, which God has provided for them.—St. Paul, in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans,

very clearly states this point: "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, saying, that the man, which doth these things, shall live by them. But the righteousness, which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."—Hence it is, that the same apostle, in answer to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" says in the text; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."—

Observe what is to be the *object* of our faith, *The Lord Jesus Christ.*

Every truth, which God hath revealed, must be received by us with faith. But Jesus Christ is the great, the grand object of faith. To believe on *Him* is the grand direction of the Gospel. When God preached the Gospel to Adam and Eve, that is, when he made known to them the new way, by which through grace, they might enter into life, he pointed out Jesus Christ to them as the object of their faith. He spoke of him as "the promised seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head." Believing this promise, looking forward to this great deliverer, who in due time should come into the world, and destroy the works of the devil, they should be saved.

When the Gospel was preached to Abraham, he was told, that "in him should all families of the earth be blessed."* What did this promise mean? It meant, that from him, in after-ages the expected Saviour should spring: through whom both Abraham himself and all the world might be saved. Believing this promise, and relying on this Saviour, Abraham was justified by faith. His faith was counted to him for righteousness. As we are told in the New Testament, "he rejoiced to see the day of Christ;" he looked forward to his coming in the flesh "and was glad."† The Gospel was afterwards preached to the children of Abraham, the Israelites. How was it preached to them? In types and shadows. Such were their temple, their high priest, their sacrifices. They were all shadows or representations of good things to come. They all pointed out Jesus Christ to the people

* Genesis xii. 3. † John viii. 57.

and taught them by faith to look to him for salvation. The Israelites were forbidden to draw nigh to God but through the mediation of their high Priest, and then only with the blood of slaughtered animals, at the temple of Jerusalem. Now these laws and restrictions implied, that there was only one way in which sinners could have access to God, namely, through the mediation of another, and by the shedding of blood. And whose mediation, whose blood was thus signified but the mediation, the blood, of Jesus Christ; "the high priest of our profession," "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world?"*

Thus we see that before the appearance of Jesus Christ in the flesh, he was still the object of faith. The grand direction of the Gospel was always the same. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The only difference was, that the worshippers of God, in those times were directed to believe on a Saviour, *who was to come.* We are directed to believe on one *who is come.* Compared with us also, they had a very imperfect knowledge of him. They saw only darkly, what we see clearly.—They did not see as we plainly see, that he was the Son of God with power. Still however he was the object of their faith: on him they believed for salvation; and were saved, if saved at all, as we are, not by works, but by the righteousness of faith.

From this statement we may distinctly see the meaning of the *direction* in the text.—Jesus Christ is the object of faith. To *believe* on him, is to believe what the Scriptures tell us of his person and offices; and to rely upon his merits and promises for our own salvation. Faith is described in the word of God, by *receiving* Christ.—Christ is set forth as an unspeakable gift. God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only-begotten Son to be our Saviour. Faith receives this gift, lays hold of it, and applies it. The language of the true believer is this, 'Has God in mercy offered his Son to be my Saviour? I thankfully embrace the offer. I make no objection on my part. I receive Christ as my Saviour.' And "to as many as thus receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God."—Faith in Christ is sometimes described by *looking* unto him. And this expression

* Rev. xiii. 8.

conveys a striking idea of what is meant by faith. Suppose that we were in circumstances of great distress. Suppose that a person, who was able to deliver us out of our trouble, should come and say to us: 'Lay aside your fears. *Look* to me in your extremity;' what should we understand him to say by that expression? We should understand him to say, 'I will be your friend. Be not discouraged. Rely on me for help. Trust to my word. Confide in my promise of providing the relief of which you stand in need.' Precisely such is the nature of faith. When we are directed to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are directed in other words, to *look unto him* with an eye of penitence and hope. We are directed to rely on him for help; to *trust* to his word; to *confide* in his promise of providing the relief of which we stand in need. Faith follows these directions; *does* look unto Jesus; submits to his righteousness, casts its care upon him, and depends on him for the accomplishment of all his promises.—Such is the *grand direction* of the Gospel. We proceed to consider,

II. The *grand promise* of the Gospel: "Thou shalt be saved." Salvation is the blessing promised. And what is salvation? It is deliverance from a state of ruin. Such we have seen was the state of man after the fall of his first parents. By sin he was involved in ruin. Such is *still* his state by nature. He is still involved in ruin. He is brought into a most miserable condition; from which however, the Gospel offers to deliver him. This is the salvation spoken of. But more clearly to see the greatness of this salvation, we must consider the several particulars of that ruin, into which, sin has plunged the human race.

1. It is a state of wrath: a state of variance and enmity with God. This is a necessary consequence of sin. God is infinitely holy and cannot but look on sin with just abhorrence. There can be no peace between God and the sinner. Sin is, in fact, rebellion against God: a direct attack upon his great and glorious perfections. Consequently it must be hateful to him. But what a dreadful state is this! That a creature should be at enmity with that blessed God in whose favour is life! That a creature, whose being, whose breath, whose com-

fort every moment depend on God, should be the object of his displeasure and wrath! How miserable, how deplorable a situation! Yet such is the state of fallen man: ' being by nature born in sin, he is the child of wrath.'

2. It is a state of condemnation. This is another necessary consequence of sin. Sin entails punishment. The holy law of God denounces a righteous sentence on every transgressor. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death."* And what is death? It is not merely the death of the body. It is something far more dreadful; the death of the soul: eternal misery in hell. "The wicked shall be turned into hell."† This is the sentence denounced against transgressors. This is the dreadful punishment which man has incurred by sin. For a short time the execution of the sentence may be deferred: but the threatened vengeance finally awaits him, and at his departure out of life, overwhelms him with deserved and everlasting misery.—Behold another part of man's wretched state by nature.

3. It is a state of bondage. Man is naturally sunk into the most abject servitude. He is led captive by Satan at his will. Having renounced the service of God he is become the servant of the devil: he obeys his orders, fulfills his pleasure, and serves his interests. Unable, because unwilling to break the chain with which he is bound, he endures the tyranny, and gratifies the malice of this his most inveterate enemy. While he serves the devil, he serves also his own lusts. Sin has dominion over him. He is under the bondage of corruption. He loves the ways, the work, the gratifications of sin: and as he feels no desire, so he makes no attempt to deliver himself out of his wretched and disgraceful slavery. This circumstance completes the misery of his fallen state.

Blessed however be the mercy and the wisdom of God! there is yet hope for man. Lost and ruined as he is, he may yet be saved. A suitable and sufficient remedy is provided, for every particular in his miserable state. The salvation offered is as complete as the misery incurred.

Is the sinner at enmity with God? A way of reconciliation is open. Christ has slain the enmity: he has taken it away, and has made peace by the blood of his cross.

* Ezek. xviii. 4. Rom. vi. 23. † Psalm ix. 17.

Those who "sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Jesus."* He is "our peace." God is well pleased with this sacrifice, which has been made for sin; and for the sake of it, is fully reconciled to all penitent believers in Jesus. They are no longer children of wrath, but dear children. He embraces them with the arms of his mercy. He loves them freely, confers on them the best gifts, and delights over them to do them good.

Is man in a state of condemnation? By the Gospel he is delivered from this state. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."† They were under sentence of eternal death: but through Jesus the sentence is repealed. He has for them satisfied the demands of the law. He suffered the penalty which they deserved to suffer. They are acquitted of every charge. They are found complete in him. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." "Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, having himself been made a curse for them." They are become "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."‡ Through Jesus, they are not only delivered from the pains of hell, but have received a title to eternal glory. They shall reign with Christ in his kingdom for ever and ever.

Is man naturally in a state of bondage? The salvation, provided in the Gospel, contains also a complete deliverance from bondage. Christ "proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He says to the prisoners, "Go forth: I have found a ransom." He has overcome the devil and spoiled principalities and powers. He has bruised the serpent's head; and in due time, will bruise him under the feet of all his people. He has disarmed death of its sting, and has vanquished the power of the grave. But especially he has provided deliverance from the power of sin. By the inspiration of his Holy Spirit he enlightens the understanding, turns the will, purifies the affections; creates all things new within; and thus, enables those, who were the wretched slaves of lust, of pride, of passion,

* Ephes. ii. 13. † Rom. viii. 1.
‡ Rom. viii. 34. Gal. iii. 13, 26.

who once lived after the flesh; to walk in newness of life, to subdue their corruptions, and to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Such is the complete deliverance, the rich salvation provided in the Gospel. What salvation, what deliverance can be compared with this?—The salvation of Noah in the ark was a *great* salvation. While all the people of the earth were swept away by the waters of the flood, he and his family were wonderfully preserved amidst this general destruction.—The deliverance of Lot out of Sodom was a *great* deliverance. When the Lord overthrew the cities of the plain with fire from heaven, he sent his angel and delivered Lot. All the inhabitants of Sodom perished, but *he* was saved alive.—The deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt was a *great* deliverance. God brought them out of bondage with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. He laid waste the land of Egypt with his plagues; but he preserved his people. He overthrew Pharaoh in the waters: but he brought Israel safely through the midst of the sea.

None of these deliverances however, can be compared with the salvation of the Gospel. They were but feeble representations of it. For how can deliverances from temporal evils be compared with a salvation from eternal misery? Can the floods of waters poured in on the old world, be compared with the floods of divine wrath, which will for ever overwhelm the unpardoned soul? Can the fire rained on Sodom be compared with that unquenchable fire with which God will consume his incorrigible enemies? Can the bondage of Egypt be compared with the dreadful bondage of sin and Satan? The deliverance of the soul from wrath, from condemnation, from the slavery of sin, as much exceeds in value and importance all these deliverances, as the soul in value and importance exceeds the body. No salvation can be put in competition with the salvation of the soul.—This is the salvation, of which the apostle speaks in the text, when he says, "Thou shalt be saved." This is the salvation which forms the grand and distinguishing promise of the Gospel.

By way then, of applying the subject, let us remember, my brethren, that this "promise is unto us, and to our children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as

the Lord our God shall call." But let us further remember, that it is not an absolute, unconditional promise. There is a condition prescribed. We must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. On this condition only, shall we be saved. We have seen that this is the grand direction of the Gospel. Let us comply with the direction and the promise shall assuredly be ours. Faith in Christ, and salvation are inseparably joined together. If we have faith in him, we shall certainly be saved: but if we have not faith in him we shall as certainly perish. Such was the tenor of our Lord's commission to his apostles, "Preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned"*—But some perhaps may object to this statement, as making the road to heaven wide and easy. 'If faith, (they say) will save us, there will be no great difficulty in obtaining eternal life: for there is no great difficulty in believing.'—But whosoever holds this language, betrays the grossest ignorance. To *believe* is a work, of all others, the most difficult. If faith, indeed, were nothing more than merely giving credit to the facts related, or to the doctrines taught in scripture, then it is true, to believe would be an easy work. But faith, the faith of which we speak, is something very different from this. It is a work in the heart. It is a sincere, a cordial acceptance of the offers of the Gospel. And is not this a difficult work? Consider how many things it includes; things directly contrary to our natural heart. To have faith implies that we have a deep sense of our guilty and sinful state; an utter renunciation of our own righteousness; a holy abhorrence of all sin; an entire submission to the will of God; and an humble, a simple dependence on Jesus Christ for salvation. Without having these things we cannot have true faith. And are not these things difficult to be acquired? Let any one make the trial and he will find them so. Let any one who has made the trial, be asked, and he will tell you that he has found them so. He will tell you that, of all works, to *believe* is the most difficult. The fact is this. Unbelief is deeply rooted in our hearts; it is intimately woven into our very nature. Faith is an holy principle, and we are

* Mark xvi. 16.

naturally unholy. Faith is an humbling principle, and we are naturally proud.—In short, *to believe* is a work naturally impossible to man. It is a divine work. It is God who creates faith in the heart; and no man can really believe to the saving of his soul, till God hath given him grace to believe.

Would we then, be partakers of the grand promise of the Gospel? Would we be saved? Let us sit down and count our cost. We cannot be saved without *believing.* We cannot believe unless God give us grace to believe. But he will give us this grace, if we earnestly seek it by the appointed means.—"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* The reading and hearing of the word of God, are the means usually blessed for producing faith in the heart. Let us then be diligent and earnest in the discharge of these duties. But especially, let us be instant in prayer. Let us pray for faith. Let us pray that we may have grace to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. No one ever prayed in earnest for this blessing, without in the end obtaining it. No one ever shall pray, in earnest, for it, without obtaining it. Let us be earnest; be importunate in asking for this gift. Our salvation depends on our procuring it: and for our comfort we are assured; "that all things whatsoever we shall ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive."†

SERMON XXV.

THE MERCY AND JUSTICE OF GOD.

As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, Turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die?—*Ezekiel,* xxxiii. 17.

ONE great design of the Bible, is to give us right thoughts of God; and thus to correct those false notions of him, which we are so apt to have. There are two ways, in which men frequently think of God; both of

* Romans x. 17. † Matthew xx. 21.

which are equally dishonourable to him and hurtful to themselves. They either regard him as a hard and severe tyrant, whom it is impossible to please; and who delights only in punishment: or, on the other hand, they consider him as a being, who is little concerned at what men do, and who is so backward to punish, as readily to pardon every offender on the most trivial excuse. Now it is plain, that such thoughts of God must lead to bad consequences. They must either sink men into slavish fear and sullen despondency; or must raise them to unwarranted hopes, and a careless presumption: both which states of mind, are as far distant from the spirit and temper of true religion; as the notions of God, on which they are founded, are from the real character given of him in scripture. In proof of this remark, let us attend to the text; and see what the Lord there says of himself. —"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evils ways: for why will ye die?" In these words, the Lord defends his character, from the injurious aspersions, which sinners cast on it. He solemnly denies the charge of injustice and tyranny; and expressly declares his readiness to receive every penitent offender: while in the very way in which he makes this declaration, he as plainly shews, that he "will by no means clear the guilty." In pursuing this subject, I shall endeavour to explain and illustrate two important truths; the first of which is *stated*, the second is *implied*, in the text. They are these,

I. That God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

II. That if the wicked do not turn from their evil ways, they will surely die.

I. In explaining the first of these truths, I would begin with reminding you that by the *death* of the wicked is here meant, not merely the death of the body in this world, but the death of the body and soul in the world to come; what is called in the book of Revelation, "*the second death*," and in the burial service of our church, *eternal death*: in other words, *everlasting punishment in hell*. So, in like manner, by the word *live* we are to understand, the being delivered from this death and the

dwelling for ever in heaven, with God in glory. The truth then, which we are considering is this: God hath no pleasure in the punishment of wicked men. Their misery and torment will afford him no gratification. He does not desire their eternal death. On the contrary, he would rather that they should be saved: he would rather that they should renounce their wickedness, and turn to him by true repentance, and so become heirs of eternal life. He will have pleasure in receiving penitent sinners to heaven; but none in condemning impenitent sinners to hell.

It must be clear, that when the Lord speaks thus of himself, he speaks after the manner of men, in condescension to the weakness of our capacities: and many curious and difficult questions might doubtless be started on this subject. But, my brethren, let us suppress a vain and an unprofitable disposition of prying into secret things. Let us not seek to be wise above what is written. Let us be satisfied with that knowledge of God, which he has been pleased to vouchsafe us of himself, and humbly learn to think of him, according to the representations given in his word.

When in the text, the Lord declares himself as "having no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" let us remember, that he confirms this declaration in the most solemn language which the Almighty could use; saying, "As I live, saith the Lord God." Nor is the text the only passage of scripture in which he gives this view of himself. In another place, he thus appeals to the persons, who would think otherwise of him; "Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?" With this representation, agrees also that of the apostle St. Peter, who expressly says, that the Lord, "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* What indeed, are all the gracious calls, invitations, and promises of scripture, the earnest admonitions to repentance, the rich declarations of God's abounding mercy and goodness; but so many proofs, that he "de-

* Ezek. xviii. 23. 2 Peter iii. 9.

sireth not the death of the wicked, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live?"

Let us notice also God's daily, actual dealings with men, and see whether they do not strikingly illustrate the truth before us. If the Lord really wished the death of sinners, how easily might he accomplish his wishes. If he really had pleasure that the wicked should die, and not live; what could be more easy to him, than to cut them off in their wickedness. In that case we might expect to see punishment quickly overtaking the offender, and judgment exercised without mercy. But do we see these things? Do we see sinners speedily and suddenly cut off in the midst of their sins, in the very act of wickedness? Occasionally, indeed, such a display of God's awful justice takes place. But how rarely does an instance of this kind occur! God's usual method is to exercise patience, long suffering and forbearance towards sinners; to be slow to anger, and backward in punishing. Instead of plunging the wicked at once into hell, he often grants to them a long reprieve, and defers the execution of the sentence for even many years. Cannot we call to mind some instances, in which God has thus borne long with sinners, and has spared them for a season, when he might justly have destroyed them? What has been the case with ourselves? Has not the Lord been long suffering towards *us?* Has he not spared *us*, when we deserved punishment, and in his wrath, has, thought upon mercy? And now *why* is all this? Why is he thus patient towards sinners, and backward in punishing them? It is, that they may have time for repentance, and space to renounce their sin, and return to their duty. It is, that they may improve the season of his long suffering, and make their peace with him and live. How clearly then, do the Lord's dealings with sinners, prove his patience and long suffering towards them! How strikingly does his conduct illustrate the meaning of his word, and shew that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked!

There is yet however, a still clearer and more striking illustration of the same truth. If God desired the death of sinners, why did he plan, provide, and publish a way of life for them? By sin they had brought themselves under the condemnation of eternal death. Had the Lord

wished them to continue in that state, he had nothing to do but to leave them to themselves, and to the consequences of their sin. They had *destroyed*, but could not *recover* themselves. God alone could make a way for their escape. He alone could do any thing to save them from dying eternally, and could open to them the kingdom of heaven. To return then to our former reasoning; *why* did he make a way for their escape: *Why* did he do any thing to save them from dying eternally: *Why* did he open to them the kingdom of heaven; if at the same time, he wished their destruction, and had pleasure in casting them into hell? His conduct, in this respect, shews that he wishes not their destruction and has no pleasure in their death.—But let us go further; let us see *what* was the way which he provided for their recovery; *what* it was that he did, in order to save them from eternal death. He gave his Son for them, his only-begotten, his dearly beloved Son. He gave *him* as a ransom for sinners; gave *him* up as a sacrifice for their sins; gave *him* up to death, even the death of the cross; that by his stripes they might be healed; that by his suffering they might be saved. This does not look as if he had pleasure in the death of the wicked. This does not look as if he delighted in punishment, and was willing that sinners should perish. On the contrary, it proves in the strongest manner, that the very reverse was the case. It shews beyond all doubt, that the Lord delighteth in the salvation of sinners, seeing he hath not withheld from them his Son, his only Son, as the price of their salvation; but was pleased even to bruise this Son and to lay on him the iniquities of us all, rather than that we should bear our own iniquities, and perish under a righteous condemnation.—Far then, for ever be the thought, that God hath pleasure in the death of the wicked! His own most solemn declarations, the universal tenor of Scripture; his actual dealings with mankind; and his stupendous gift of a Saviour, that unspeakable expression of his love and mercy; all join in proclaiming that the Lord is merciful and gracious, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.—We proceed then, to the second truth, which I proposed to explain and illustrate, namely,

II. That if the wicked do not turn from their evil ways, they will surely die.

This truth is not like the first, expressly *stated* in the text, but it is clearly *implied* in it. When the Lord declares that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should live;" let us observe, that he doth not merely say, *live*, but *turn from his ways and live*. He joins these things together. He speaks of turning from their ways, as a necessary step towards their living; and consequently *implies*, that without turning from their ways, they cannot live. Again, in that earnest and tender expostulation, which he immediately adds, saying; "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, why will ye die?" the same truth is still more distinctly taught: for no one surely can hear these words without understanding them to mean, that if the wicked do not turn from their evil ways, they will certainly die.

But what is the turning from our evil ways, which is here signified? It is not shedding a few tears of sorrow and remorse. It is not forming a few serious resolutions. It is not leaving off a few bad practices. It is not attending to religious duties more constantly, or more strictly than formerly. By the expression, *turning from our evil ways*, is meant a deep and total change of the heart and life; a conversion of the whole soul; a turning from sin to God, in the inner man. The person, who is turned from his evil ways, is a "new creature;" he has a new heart and a new spirit: "Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." He has new desires and dispositions, and these lead him to walk in newness of life: so that henceforth, having "laid aside every weight, and especially the sin which most easily besets him;" hating and forsaking every false way, and having respect unto all God's commandments, he proves in a way, which cannot be mistaken, that he has indeed turned out of "the broad road of destruction," into "the narrow way that leadeth unto life."—Such is the great, thorough, spiritual change which is here signified. Nothing short of such a change as this, will at all come up to the full scriptural meaning of the expression in the text; and without being thus turned from our evil ways, we shall surely die.

This truth, like the one before considered, is supported by abundant testimony; and the only difficulty lies in choosing the plainest proofs. We have, in the first place, the most positive declarations of Scripture: "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "The wicked," that is, the impenitent and unconverted, "are reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." "He, that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." "They shall go away into everlasting punishment." "The Lord shall rain upon them snares; fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." They "shall not escape" but "shall be turned into hell;" "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."*

To these awful declarations, we may in the next place add, the Lord's actual dealings with men. His conduct towards them illustrates this truth, no less clearly than the former: for though he be long-suffering towards sinners, yet his patience will not last for ever. He waiteth that he may be gracious: but if men despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance; if, because sentence against their evil works be not executed speedily, therefore, their hearts are the more fully set in them to do evil; if in short, they are not led by the Lord's goodness to repentance; the certain consequence will be, that judgment will at length overtake them, and at a time when they are not aware. How many instances of this deferred, but righteous, vengeance do we find in scripture! God bore long with the sinners before the flood. He granted them a reprieve for one hundred and twenty years; but when they repented not, at the appointed time, he fulfilled his threatenings and drowned the world. He bore long with Pharaoh and the Egyptians: but at length, their impenitence wearied out his mercy, and he overthrew them all in the Red Sea. He bore long with his people Israel in the wilderness; and notwithstanding their disobedience

* Luke xiii. 3. John iii. 3. Matt. xviii. 3. Job xxi. 30. Isaiah xxvii. 2. Matt. xxv. 46. Psalm xi. 6.—ix. 17. Mark ix. 44.

and rebellion, suffered not his whole displeasure to arise: but at last, in the day of provocation, he sware that they should never enter into his rest. These things, which happened unto them for examples, and are written for our admonition, strikingly illustrate the truth before us. And how many illustrations of the same truth, do we continually see! How frequently do we see judgments overtaking the wicked in this world! How frequently does "the Lord come forth out of his place," his mercy-seat, "to punish the inhabitants of the earth, for their iniquity!" By all which displays of his awful justice he significantly teaches us, that a day of wrath will finally come, "a day of the revelation of his righteous judgment," when those who "have set at nought all his counsel, and would have none of his reproof," "shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

But further, the very way, in which God has manifested his richest mercy towards sinners, proves beyond all doubt, the certainty of his judgments on the impenitent. For be it remembered, that to "bless us by turning every one of us from his iniquities," is as much a part of that salvation, which the Son of God came from heaven to perfect; as to deliver us from the guilt of sin, and the pains of hell. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."* And though pardon of sin be undoubtedly represented, as the first great blessing of the Gospel; yet conversion from sin is constantly set forth as the certain effect, the necessary fruit, the indispensable evidence of an interest in this blessing. The faith, which by joining sinners to Christ, justifies their persons, will also sanctify their hearts: it will create in them a godly sorrow for sin, and cause them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. What then will become of the impenitent? By continuing such they plainly shew that they have no faith in Christ, and consequently no union with him, no interest in his promises, no share in his salvation. How then shall they escape? What chance, what probability, what possibility is there, that they shall go unpunished? The very blood of Jesus, which might plead effectually in their behalf,

* Titus ii. 14.

will cry aloud against them. The very mercy, which they slight, will more clearly expose the incorrigible hardness of their hearts, and will call for a tenfold vengeance on their heads.—Surely then it is as plain that the wicked, who turn not from their evil ways, shall certainly die, as it is that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they should turn and live.—Nor let us suppose that these truths at all contradict each other. There may be a *seeming*, but there is no *real* opposition between them. Let us remember, that "the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."* He "will get him honour" upon all his creatures, and every one must do him glory. If sinners refuse to glorify his mercy by turning to him, and receiving the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, they must glorify his justice by suffering the punishment which his law denounces on their sins.

Behold then, my brethren, the goodness and the severity of God,—his *goodness* towards those who turn to him, through the Gospel of his Son.—His *severity* towards those, who continue in their sins; and while you behold these things, recollect how deeply you are concerned in them. Have you been hitherto of the number of those, who entertain hard thoughts of God? Have you looked on him, as a severe and cruel master, whom it is difficult, if not impossible, to please; who takes pleasure in punishing, and is extreme to mark what is done amiss? O! lay aside such unreasonable thoughts, so dishonourable to God, so hurtful to yourselves. There is no foundation for them: for the Lord, as you have seen, delighteth in mercy. He is full of grace, goodness, and truth; and far from wishing you to perish, is anxiously waiting for your repentance.—Or, on the other hand, are you of that still more numerous class, who presumptuously think, that God will not punish sinners? Do you dare foolishly to imagine, that God has uttered threatenings which he never purposes to execute; that whether you repent or not, you shall yet escape; that at the most, a little outward change at last, or a few tears, shed on your death-bed, will be sufficient to save your souls? Have you such thoughts as these? Learn from the view here given of the justice and

* Proverbs, xvi. 4.

severity of God, how vain they are; how worse than vain, how profane and impious! Then part with them for ever. Deeply fix it in your heart, as a truth, which can never be denied, (may the Lord fix it there by his spirit!) that without a real, an inward, an abiding change you cannot possibly escape everlasting death.

What remains, my brethren, but that I earnestly and affectionately address you in the concluding words of the text; "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die?" When God is so willing to save your soul, why should you be willing to destroy it? When he offers you life, why should you choose death? When he calls you to share the happiness of heaven, why should you prefer the miseries of hell? May the Lord dispose your hearts, to repent and believe the Gospel! May he turn you from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin!

SERMON XXVI.

THE PRESENT TIME THE MOST CONVENIENT FOR REPENTANCE.

Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.—*Acts* xxiv. 25.

WITH these words, Felix the Roman governor stifled his convictions and resisted the Holy Ghost. His conscience had not been proof against the faithful preaching of St. Paul. The word of God, "which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," had reached the sinner's heart. It had struck terror into his soul. Nor had he been able to hide his feelings. "As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." His trembling however, was but for a moment. He quickly got rid of his fears, and recovered his spirits. He did not indeed reprove or threaten the apostle for his boldness; neither did he deny the truth of what had been said: but unable to bear the preacher, or his presence, he pleaded want of leisure; said

that he had not time to listen any longer to his discourse; and promised on some more *suitable* occasion, to give him another hearing; "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

It is probable, that in saying this, Felix might not say more, than at the moment he really meant. It is probable, that he intended to do what he said he would. But alas! he knew neither the deceitfulness of his heart, nor the hardening nature of sin. He knew not that in putting off his convictions to some other time, he was perhaps putting them off for ever. And this, in fact, was the case. For we do not find that the *convenient* season, of which he spake, ever came. On the contrary, he afterwards "sent for the apostle often and communed with him:" yet we are expressly told, that it was only in the "hope that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him."

On hearing this account of the Roman governor, we may be ready to say, 'What a pity it was, that he acted thus! What a pity it was that he did not instantly yield to his convictions; forsake his sins; and become a christian!' It was indeed a pitiable case. But it is not the only instance of a sinner thus deceiving himself, resisting his convictions and putting off his repentance, to what he thinks will be a more convenient season. It is to be feared that such things happen daily: that numbers are continually falling into this snare of the devil; that convinced in their hearts of the absolute necessity of being thoroughly religious, in order to being saved, they are yet striving against this conviction; and whenever it may press upon them with more than usual seriousness, are inwardly saying to it, as Felix said to the apostle, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

This is an error so common, and at the same time so dangerous; *one* so closely joined with our present comfort, and eternal happiness, that I shall try particularly to expose it, and if possible to free us from its power. May God be with us by his spirit, while I endeavour to point out and answer some of those false pleas, on which persons put off their becoming religious to a more *convenient* season.

I. One of these pleas is *youth*. They are at present *too young* to be religious.

In the first place then, let me address the young; and bespeak their very serious attention. I am supposing that they allow the *importance* of religion; that they feel convinced of the necessity of being religious; and that they seriously intend one day to become so. But the present season does not appear to them so *suitable* for this great purpose. They are of opinion, that some time hence a more *convenient* opportunity will come. 'Youth,' they cry, 'is the season of gaiety and thoughtlessness. At this time of life, our spirits are naturally high, and our passions strong. Consequently to become religious, while we are young, will be far more difficult, than it will be when we are somewhat older. Time will weaken our appetites. Our passions will be worn out by a little indulgence. As we advance in years, we shall naturally grow more steady and serious, and disposed to religion. As our reason becomes stronger, our evil propensities will of course, become weaker. So that, in fact, the difficulties, which now stand in our way will be almost entirely removed: and therefore we may be fully justified in putting off our repentance till this convenient season shall come.' Now, my young friends, I would readily believe that you use this language in the sincerity of your hearts. I would give you full credit, for thinking and meaning exactly what you say. I would not suppose that, in this matter, you have any intention to deceive. But are you not yourselves deceived? In the most solemn manner, let me caution you against giving way to such delusive reasonings. In all this statement, every single argument is false. Youth, so far from being an unfit time, is of all times the fittest, for becoming religious. Though, at that season the spirits be high, and the passions strong; yet then also the heart is soft, the conscience is tender, the affections are warm. Then it is that the mind, like wax, is most ready to receive impressions, and most likely to keep them. We all know, how much the future character in life, depends on the impressions received in youth. You talk of the appetites being weakened by time. Alas! you know not what you say. If you wished to pluck up a tree by the roots; which

would you select with the greatest hope of success; one which had been planted for a few months; or one, which had grown many years? You know that time would fix the tree deeper in the ground, and would greatly increase the difficulty of plucking it up. Why then should you not suppose, that time will do the same by your appetites, and will make the rooting of them out hereafter a far more difficult work than it would now be. Be assured that this will be the case. Years, instead of weakening will only strengthen your appetites, and fix them deeper in your heart. You talk of your passions being worn out by indulgence. Here again you know not what you say. Would you abate the fury of a fire, by putting on more fuel? Would you diminish the violence of a stream by letting into it a greater quantity of water? In both instances you would defeat your own purpose and only increase what you thought to lessen. So it will be with your passions, if you hope to wear them out by indulgence. Indulgence will only increase their force. The more they have, the more they will require. And by the time, at which you suppose, that they will be most easily overcome, they will have got to such a head, that tenfold labour will be necessary to subdue them. It may be true that when you are grown older, you may perhaps become more thoughtful and steady: but it is not true, that you will become more disposed to religion, than you now are. On the contrary, you will if possible be less disposed to it. Your thoughtfulness and steadiness will reach only to worldly things. Your youthful follies may be over; but your heart will be as far off from God, as it is at present. Be not then deceived. That *more convenient season*, of which you speak, will never come. The present season is the most convenient. If you let it slip, you will never have such another. You will find it an *easier* work to become religious now, in the days of your youth, than you will do, when your conscience shall be hardened, and sin be made familiar to you. Would that you could be persuaded of this truth! Would that you could be prevailed on to set about this work in earnest! How much pain, and grief, and shame will you thus avoid! What reason will you have to bless the day, in which you truly turned to God! Be persuaded.

Be prevailed on. Say not to the spirit now pleading in your heart, "Go thy way for this time." Rather say, "Come Lord 'Jesus:'" Enter into my soul. Take up thy abode there. Make me altogether thine. To day, while it is called to day, let not my heart be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!

II. Another plea, on which men put off their becoming religious to a more convenient season, is *business*. They are at present too busy to be religious. They hope to become religious at some future time: but this is not a convenient season for it. Their head and hands are now full of worldly cares. They are now occupied in providing for their wants, in maintaining their family, or in making a fortune. Day and night they are taken up with these things. What time then have they for religion? No season could possibly be so inconvenient for such a pursuit, as the present. But in a few years things will be altered. Business will be growing less. Their wants will be fewer. Their family will be provided for. Their fortune will be made. They shall *then* have more leisure to attend to religion. They shall have less to do with the concerns of this world, and consequently more time for looking after the concerns of the next. For the present then, they will put away their serious thoughts; and, when the convenient season comes, will call for them again.

This is their way of reasoning. And now, my brethren, in stating this reasoning, have I not stated the very reasoning, which some of you are using; by which you are silencing the voice of conscience, and justifying yourselves in a course of irreligion?

To such among you let me next address myself; and would! that I might convince you, of the falsehood of your reasoning!

If the matter really be as I have here supposed you to state it; if you be so entirely taken up with worldly business, as *really* to have no time for the concerns of religion: in this case, let me earnestly and solemnly charge you, as you value the favour of God, and the salvation of your soul, to make your worldly business less. Whatever you may lose of the world, have less to do with the world. For you are most grossly deceiving yourselves, if you can suppose, that there is any worldly business of any kind,

which is of a thousandth part of the consequence to you, as the care of your soul. This is your *great* business: and if you *really* have not time to attend to this business and to your worldly business too, there cannot be a moment's doubt, *which* you should give up. "One thing is needful."

But, my brethren, I can hardly believe that this is *really* the case. I can hardly believe, that *any* of you are so taken up with worldly business, as not *really* to have time for religious concerns. Remember, that religion is not intended for those only, who have nothing or little to do. It is intended for all men; and consequently, for those, who are actively engaged in the business of life. Religion is not a work to be done at some spare time, or leisure hour when we are free from worldly business. Far otherwise. It is to be the work of all our time, of every hour, and to enter into *all* our worldly business. The truly religious man is one, who does not neglect his worldly business. but who carries it on, upon religious principles, and with religious views. While he is "not slothful in business, he is also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." To say then that you have not *time* to be religious, is in truth, to talk absurdly. For while you have time to attend to the concerns of your profession or your trade, while you have time to plough, and time to sow; while you have time to sell, and time to buy; you must have time to be religious; since to be religious, is to do all these things with religion in your heart. What time then, can be so convenient for being religious, as the present? You think, that at some future period, a more convenient time will come. But it is a sad mistake. Consider with yourselves, how long it is, since first you made the same excuse. You will find perhaps that ten, or fifteen years ago, you pleaded your worldly business as a reason for neglecting religion. You still plead the same reason. The more convenient season is not yet come. Why should you suppose that ten or fifteen years hence, you will not still urge the same excuse? Be assured it will be so. The more convenient season will never come. Though your family may be provided for; though your fortune may be made; yet you will still find your head and hands to be as full of

business as they ever were. You will still find, that you are too busy to become religious. Habit will have become a second nature: and to turn to God with all your heart, will be as *inconvenient* then, as it is now. Defer not then this necessary work any longer. You will never have a season more fitted for it, than the present. May you "know in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace, before they are hidden from your eyes!"

III. A third plea, on which men put off their becoming religious to a more *convenient* season, is *health*. This indeed is a plea, which they do not urge so *openly*, as the other two, which have been noticed. But it is one which they as frequently *urge in their own hearts*, and on which they secretly act. When alarmed, as Felix was, by the faithful preaching of God's word; when convinced of the necessity of heartily turning to God in order to be saved; they are apt to say thus within themselves, 'True, we must turn to God, or perish. We know that if we die in an ungodly state, we shall be condemned. But what need is there of so much haste? We are at present, in no danger of dying. As yet, we have health and strength. We may promise to ourselves many years to come. Then let us take a little more pleasure, and enjoy ourselves a little longer. Let us put off this work of religion to a season more suited to it. A time of sickness will come. We shall then be prevented from following our worldly pursuits. We shall then have leisure for reflection. We shall have nothing else to do, but to repent, and make our peace with God, and prepare for death. That will be a season of all others, the best fitted for this work. Therefore to that season we will defer it.'—Of all the pleas, which have been mentioned, this perhaps betrays the greatest enmity of the heart to God. But it is the *folly* of the plea, which I am particularly concerned to shew: and would that I could shew it, in a manner sufficiently striking and impressive!

Suppose, my brethren, that you had some business of great moment to transact; some long and difficult account to settle; some work to do, which required much thought, recollection, and resolution: would you choose for doing such a work, a time of sickness, or a season of

health? Would you prefer transacting this great business at a time, when your body was stout and strong, and your mind sound and vigorous; or when both were enfeebled and distracted by pain and sickness? At such a time, should it be proposed to you to enter on such a work, you would surely say; 'I am not fit for this matter at present. I am too weak to attend to it now. A work of this kind is not suited to a sick man. How can you suppose, that in this low and painful condition, I can call forth and exert that attention and seriousness which such a business demands?' This is what you would say; and would *justly* say, under such circumstances. But then let me ask you in return: How can you suppose that at such a time, and under such circumstances, you will be fit for the greatest, and the most difficult of all works, for making your peace with God, and for exerting all that thought, and recollection, and resolution, which such a work requires? Had you witnessed the scenes which your ministers sometimes witness, you would be sensible of the utter vanity of such a supposition: had you been called, as they have been, to the chambers of the sick, and the beds of the dying; had you there seen, as they have seen, the arduous, the almost impossible task, of fixing any thing like a religious impression on the mind, when disease and decay have deadened the faculties, and perhaps impaired the senses: had you been forced, as they have been, to give the matter up in despair, and to come away from the sick man's house, under a full persuasion that he was become incapable of profiting by their prayers or counsels: You would then be deeply convinced, that the time of sickness is not a convenient time for *becoming* religious. You would then be deeply convinced, that to put off your repentance to such a season, is deliberately to imitate the conduct of the foolish virgins; to defer the going in search of oil, till the bridegroom shall be coming, and the door be shut. God grant that you may be deeply convinced of this truth; and not put off *your* repentance "till the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them!"

But in addition to all which has been said, there is one thing more to be stated: one thing, which of itself is an

answer to all the pleas that have been mentioned, and to every plea which can be mentioned, for putting off your repentance to a more convenient season. It is this. The present season is the only season of which you are *sure*. Could it then be proved that your pleas were well founded, yet how would they justify you in continuing to live irreligiously? Could it even be proved that the time of youth, or of business, or of health, were not so *convenient* a season for repentance, as the time which you fancy to yourself; yet how do you know, but that this less convenient season, as you judge it, may be the only season given to you? Many are cut off in the midst of youth, of business, of health. Why may not this be your case? Have you any security that it will not? In the midst of life, we are in death. Your breath hangs by a thread, which the next moment may be cut asunder. Talk not then of more convenient seasons. There is none convenient but the present. "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation!" put not off to another day, to another hour, the great work of saving your soul; lest another day, another hour, may never be given you for doing it. "To day harden not your heart." Redeem the time. "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him *immediately*. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching."*

* Luke xii. 35—37.

SERMON XXVII.

DESCRIPTION AND DANGER OF CONVICTION WHEN NOT FOLLOWED BY CONVERSION.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house, whence I came out; and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first.—*Luke* xi. 24—26.

CONVERSION is that great change from a natural to a spiritual state, without which no man can be saved. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Let us not however mistake the nature of this change. Let us not suppose, that every sudden resolution of amendment, every occasional breaking off from evil practices, every slight reformation of the outward conduct, is to be honoured with the title of conversion. True conversion is a *change of heart:* a deep, an abiding change of the *whole* heart, wrought by divine grace. It is a turning from sin to God in the inner man: 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness:' a new creation of the heart unto holiness, proving itself to be real, by bringing forth the habitual fruits of righteousness. This, in the language and meaning of scripture, is true conversion: and every pretension to this change, which is not thus distinguished, is counterfeit and vain. A man, under the weight of present convictions, may make many resolutions of amendment, and even in some respects, may reform his life: but unless he be renewed in the inner man; unless his heart be changed and become an habitation of God through the Spirit: the certain consequence will be, that so soon as his present convictions shall have lost their force, he will return to his evil courses, and thus sink into a state far more dangerous, than even that in which he formerly was.—Such precisely is the case, which our Lord describes in the text.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out: and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

It is the awful and melancholy case here described which I now purpose to consider. God grant! that the consideration of it may be profitable to our souls! There are several particulars in the description, which shall be noticed in order.

I. The first is the state of a man, when the unclean spirit is gone out of him. All unconverted men are spiritually the slaves of Satan. He leads them captive at his will. He lives, he works, he rules in them; and like a "strong man armed keeps his palace and his goods in peace." He is represented however, as occasionally quitting his hold; as departing for a short time from the soul, and losing his power over the heart. "He goeth out of the man." In other words, the sinner is stopped in his sinful course by a conviction of its danger. Conscience is alarmed: and none of those arts, by which Satan has hitherto silenced its voice, will at present avail. He no longer keeps his goods *in peace*. Such a disturbance is raised in the soul; such a discovery is made of his tyranny and designs, that he is forced for a season to retire.—But let us take a closer view of what is here meant. Let us suppose to ourselves a man living in a state of careless security about his soul, walking after the lusts of the flesh, and wholly given up to the world and to the things of the world. The present life, with its wants and cares, its pleasures and amusements, takes up all his time and thoughts. As for religion, though he may not formally renounce it; yet heaven and hell are things, which clearly have no real influence on his conduct. He lives "without God in the world;" and is no more troubled about eternity and all its awful consequences, than if he were like a beast, that perishes.

Let us suppose to ourselves a man of this description: (How many are there to whom the description will apply!) and then let us farther suppose him suddenly awakened

to reflection. An alarming sermon or an affecting providence; the death of some of his companions, or the preservation of his own life from some imminent danger, has touched his conscience. Perhaps disease, the natural fruit of some of his evil practices, has seized upon his body and brought death before his eyes. He seems to stand on the brink of the grave; and begins to see many things as he never saw them before. He looks back on his mispent life with bitter self-reproach. He looks forward with dreadful apprehension. The vanity of the world now strikes him with full force: for it can neither furnish relief to his body nor consolation to his mind. The folly of his choice in having preferred this life to the next appears in its most glaring colours, and draws forth heart-felt lamentations. The occasions, the places, the companions of his sins pass before his mind in sad review: while the tremendous punishments, that await him, present themselves in their most frightful images. Alarmed, dismayed, confounded, he vows and prays. He sends perhaps for the minister of the Gospel; hears the glad tidings of salvation; resolves to sin no more; and in his own idea, for ever renounces every evil practice. See here the state described in this part of the text. Behold the man *when the unclean spirit is gone out of him.*—But is he then converted? The next particular in the description will shew us that he is not.

II. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out: *and when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished.*"—The devil, having unwillingly quitted his hold in the sinner's heart, is impatient to return; and through his restless love of wickedness, can find no peace till he has recovered the power which he has lost. Accordingly he comes back to his palace; examines its state; and finds it as suitably prepared and furnished for his reception as it ever was. The fact is, no work of grace has really taken place in the heart. The man has been terrified, but not converted. His nature remains the same. No change has taken place within. There pride and the love of sin still continue in their full strength, and fit him, as much as ever, for being the palace and resi-

dence of Satan. This may be shewn in two particular instances.

1. Amidst all his convictions he has had no sense of the *evil* of sin. He has bitterly lamented the consequences of sin, so far as they affect himself, by bringing on him misery and destruction: but he has never lamented it as having been committed against a good and holy God. He has never seen it in its true colours, nor hated it for its evil nature. It constantly follows, whenever the love and power of sin are broken in the heart, that a man hates and bewails sin for its own sake. But this has not been the case with the person, of whom we are speaking. He has bewailed indeed the *punishment* of sin: but he has never truly owned the *justice* of that punishment. He has felt his *misery*; but he has never heartily confessed his *guilt*. He has seen that he *must* suffer and has trembled; but he has never been deeply convinced that he *deserves* to suffer. On the contrary, he has ever to a certain degree, stood out on his defence before God. Instead of casting himself wholly on the divine mercy, with deep and penitent confessions of his unworthiness, and charging upon himself without reserve, the entire guilt and shame of all his numerous transgressions he has constantly thrown the fault on something else. He has ascribed his miscarriages to the want of better instruction, or to the seduction of bad examples; to the strength of his passions, or to the peculiarity of his situation. Thus has he framed some excuse for himself; and has clearly betrayed the proud and unhumbled state of his heart.

2. He has given a further proof, that this is still the state of his heart, by the reliance which he has placed on *his own strength and goodness*. The truly-converted soul always feels its own weakness and corruption, gives up all self-dependence, and trusts solely to the promised assistance of divine grace. But the person whom we are describing, has felt nothing of this kind, nor done any of these things. He has *resolved* indeed to forsake all sin: but he has made this resolution trusting entirely to *his own strength*. He has had no *fear* of his own heart, nor any notion of its utter depravity. He has not suspected its deceitful nature; nor looked upon it as the impure fountain, from whence all the polluted streams of his life

have flowed. Consequently he has never earnestly sought for divine assistance, and a new heart. He has cried for *pardon*, but he has never really prayed for *grace*. Confident of his own sufficiency, he has never humbly applied to Christ for his Holy Spirit to support and sanctify him. Can he then be said to be really converted? It is plain, that his heart remains unchanged; the same impure habitation, which it has always been; a stranger to Christ, who alone could cleanse it, and still "swept and garnished," as before for the reception and service of the devil. Such, on his return, the unclean spirit finds it. And this leads us to the next particular mentioned in the text.

III. "Then taketh he unto him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there." These words describe the sinner's awful relapse under the power of Satan. The steps, by which he returns to his wretched slavery, are plain and easy to be traced. As his convictions had arisen only from fear; so when the causes of his fear are removed, his convictions gradually die away. He recovers, it may be, from the disease which threatened to destroy him: and death, being thus placed at a greater distance, begins to lose much of its terror. No longer standing, as he supposed, on the brink of the grave, he no longer trembles at what is beyond it. As health returns, former propensities return. Long-indulged habits call loudly for their usual gratifications. Unmortified lusts revive, and renew their strength. Old companions in sin allure. Prayer is less frequently and less earnestly used. The remonstrances of conscience are less carefully observed. One resolution is broken after another: till at length, the whole man again enlists himself in the service of Satan. The devil "takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; enters in and dwells there." He now takes entire possession of the man and plunges him into still deeper wickedness. The wretched apostate, set free from the temporary restraints of conscience, and the terrifying fear of death, returns with keener relish to his guilty pleasures, runs greater lengths in sin, and "follows all uncleanness with greediness."—Throwing aside shame, as well as fear, he sinks perhaps into a hardened infidel, a profane scoffer at serious

godliness, and a determined corrupter of others: or, what is equally ruinous, turns the grace of God into licentiousness; becomes a wicked professor of the Gospel; preserves the form of godliness but denies the power of it; and holding the truth in unrighteousness, follows the doctrine of those, who "sin on that grace may abound;" "whose damnation is just." We now come to the fourth particular described.

IV. "The last state of that man is worse than the first." It is worse in three respects.

1. His guilt is greater.

He has now more to answer for, than he before had. He does not now sin in ignorance, as perhaps he once did: which though it might not altogether do away his guilt, would yet, in some degree, make it less. He has seen his danger: he has heard his duty; he has been taught the way of salvation. He is now sinning against light and knowledge, and conviction. He has deliberately plunged into wickedness with his eyes open. Having once escaped "the pollutions of the world," he is again, willingly, and knowingly "entangled therein and overcome." Nay farther, he is acting thus in direct opposition to his own most solemn resolutions and vows; to those earnest protestations of amendment, which he poured forth in the day of his distress. How repeatedly did he promise, if God would prolong his life, that he would no more turn to his idols! How earnestly did he pray for pardon, on the express condition that he would sin no more! His load of guilt is enlarged a thousand fold and threatens to sink him down with intolerable weight into everlasting ruin.

2. His misery will be greater.

This consequence must naturally follow. They whose guilt is greater, will justly receive a greater damnation. "It had been better for them (says St. Peter of such characters) not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."* And St. Jude declares of such, that to them is "reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."† Indeed, in the very nature of things, the man's misery must now be greater, than it would otherwise have been: for the very thought of having been

* 2 Peter ii. 21. † Jude 13.

once on the way to heaven; must greatly increase his wretchedness at finally losing it, and must give additional anguish to the gnawing of that worm which never dieth.

3. His danger is greater.

He *may* still be converted and find mercy. By turning to God in true faith and repentance, he *may* even yet be delivered from guilt and misery. But conversion is now *less likely* to take place, than it formerly was. We are told in the Hebrews, that "if those who have once been enlightened fall away, it is *impossible*, to renew them again unto repentance."* Their renewal indeed is not actually impossible; for with God all things are possible: but it is *highly improbable*. Repentance is the gift of Christ, and it is less likely, that he will bestow it on such as have so wickedly abused his long-suffering towards them, and have thus wilfully broken their most solemn engagements with him. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit; and can it be reasonably supposed that he will vouchsafe his grace to those, who have so daringly resisted and provoked him? If they be now saved, it must indeed be by a miracle of mercy. If they are now snatched from destruction, it must indeed be like as a brand plucked out of the fire. Far more probable is it, according to God's usual dealings with mankind, that they will now be left to themselves, to be hardened in their iniquity; to fill up the measure of their sins; and thus "to eat of the fruit of their own way, and to be filled with their own devices."

Such are the several particulars contained in this most awful description. The grand lesson, which we learn from it, is to beware of *trifling with convictions*. Convictions of our sin and danger are the means, which God employs for "bringing us out of darkness into his marvellous light." But there are two ways, in which we may make these means of no effect; by resisting them or by resting in them.—To *resist* convictions is at once to put a stop to God's merciful dealings with our soul. To *rest in them* is to defeat his gracious purpose in another, but not a less certain way.

Are any of you then under conviction of sin? Do you see something of your guilt and misery as sinners? Has

* Hebrews vi. 4, 5.

the word of God touched your consciences and excited your fears? Has it led you to feel some doubts and misgivings concerning the safety of your soul? Let me exhort, let me charge, let me beseech you, as you value your everlasting peace, *resist* not the grace of God, which is thus striving with you. It may be the first dawn of that light in your soul, which, if suffered to increase, will never be put out. It may be the first spark of that heavenly fire, which, if not at present smothered, will burn for ever. Quench not the Spirit. Though the thought, that *you are a sinner*, be a painful, a humiliating thought, yet drive it not away. Listen to it as the voice of Christ speaking to your heart. Receive it as the merciful suggestion of the Almighty for the salvation of your soul. Encourage it by meditation and retirement. Above all, pray earnestly to God, that you may not be guilty of "doing despite unto the spirit of his grace;" and that he may not have reason to say of you: "I called but he refused: I stretched out my hands, but he would not regard."

On the other hand, while you resist not conviction, beware of *resting in it*. You will not be saved by a *conviction* of your sins, but by a *conversion* from them. Mistake not one of these things for the other. Many perish through this mistake. Think not because you have felt some alarm for your soul, that therefore all is well. Think not, because you have been troubled with a recollection of your sins, that therefore the power of sin is broken in your heart. These are very different things. Conviction of sin is indeed a probable step to conversion: but it is *only* a step: a step, which if you advance no further, instead of saving your soul, will plunge it deeper in guilt and misery. *Rest* not then in your convictions. Stop not here; but go on in the blessed path. Pray earnestly to God, that he will be pleased to perfect unto the end, the good work, which he has begun in you; that you may sorrow for your sins with a godly sorrow: that you may be not only convinced but converted: that your proud spirit may be humbled, and your corrupt nature purified: that "Christ may [illegible] your heart by faith:" that He may reign and

rule there; and "all your members be yielded as instruments of righteousness unto God."

And here I might finish the discourse, did not compassion require that a word should still be said to those unhappy persons whose state I have been describing. But how shall I address them? My brethren, your case indeed is sad: but is it utterly lost, utterly beyond all hope and remedy? God forbid! that I should thus seal you to destruction. Low as you are sunk beneath the common depths of wickedness there is yet power with the Almighty to raise you up. In Christ are riches unsearchable and mercies boundless. He has "gifts even for the rebellious." His compassions fail not. His arms are always open to receive the returning prodigal. "Turn then to this strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Break the chain with which you are bound, and return unto the Lord. Cast yourselves on his mercy. Pray to him, "if peradventure he will give you repentance unto the acknowledgment of the truth." Plead with him to fulfil his gracious promise of taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh. Add not to your already enormous sins by any longer delay, "lest he swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest." "To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your heart." "Seek the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near." May he heal your backslidings! May he receive you graciously! May his anger be turned away!

SERMON XXVIII.

THE BROKEN HEART AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE.

The Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.—*Psalm* li. 17.

THIS passage of Scripture is one of the
which our Church has appointed to be occasio

at the beginning of her daily service. Nor could any passage of Scripture have been more suitably chosen for the purpose; for while it points out to us the frame and disposition of soul, which we should bring with us to the House of God; it encourages the humble worshipper to draw near with a confident expectation of being favourably received. In fact, David here describes that state of heart, which is all in all in religion; without which no religious profession can avail, no performance of religious duties can be accepted. "The sacrif[illegible] are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite [illegible] God! Thou wilt not despise." Let us consider,

I. The *State* of Heart here described.

II. The *Favour*, with which God regards it.

I. The State of Heart here spoken of is described by the expressions of "a *broken* spirit" "a *broken* and a *contrite* heart." A broken heart is a phrase in common use among us. We sometimes talk of a man being *broken hearted*; and what we generally mean by this expression, is, that he is utterly weighed down and overcome by grief or fear. His spirits sink under the burden. Unable any longer to contend, he yields to his difficulties, and gives up all hope. Such, however, is not exactly the meaning of this expression as it is used in the text. By a *broken heart* is here meant, a heart convinced and humbled indeed, under a sense of sin; but not in despair. It describes a state of heart directly the reverse of what is the natural state. Naturally the heart is proud, unconscious of its guilt, stout in defending itself, and boasting of its own merit and goodness. But the broken heart is humble, thoroughly convinced of its sin, and unreservedly condemning itself on account of it. The scriptures sometimes compare these two different states of the heart, to a heart of stone and a heart of flesh. The natural heart is a heart of stone. It is cold and hard, and resists all impressions. It is moved neither by the promises, nor by the threatenings of scripture. But the *broken* heart is a heart of flesh. It is warm, tender, and like wax, readily receives and keeps the image stamped on it. It reveres the [illegible] of God and "trembles at his word."—It was said, [illegible] the broken heart, though humbled under a sense of sin, is not in despair. This is to be noted. A

state of despair can never be pleasing to God. Nor is such the state here described. When the heart is broken, it despairs indeed of establishing its own righteousness. Once it hoped to justify itself before God, and to stand on its own merits. But now all such hopes are gone for ever. It has seen too clearly, and felt too deeply its own unworthiness to have a thought of this kind. *Here* it despairs. It despairs of saving itself; but it does not despair of being saved by God's mercy in Jesus Christ. To *this* it looks with hope; perhaps with a trembling hope, but still with hope. On this alone it depends for acceptance with God, and gives up every other plea but this.

But further, the heart, here spoken of, is described as being not only *broken*, but *contrite*. "A *broken* and a *contrite* heart." Now as the expression of a *broken heart* signifies its being *deeply convinced of sin;* so that of a *contrite* heart denotes its being *truly penitent for it.* Contrition is that "*godly sorrow* for sin," of which the scriptures speak. There is a sorrow for sin, which does not answer this description. A man may be very sorry for his sin, when he finds that he is to suffer for it. A sight of the good which he has lost, or of the evil which he has brought on himself, may affect him with the most lively grief. Thus Esau bitterly lamented that he had despised his birth-right; when he found that in consequence he had forfeited the blessing. Thus many criminals grieve for their offence, when it has brought them to prison and to death. But this is not "*godly* sorrow." This is not *contrition.* To "sorrow after a *godly* manner," is to lament the *evil* of sin; to feel *shame* and *compunction* at the thought of our guilt and baseness. It is to grieve for our sins as having been committed against a good and holy God, who has been daily loading us with benefits and mercies. "Godly sorrow" has always an eye to *God.* It looks upon sin as an act of rebellion against *God;* as an attack made on *God;* as an *affront* done to God; as ingratitude shewn to *God*—especially as he is "God in Christ reconciling us to himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us." It is this way of looking on sin that wounds and grieves the soul, and excites in it true *contri-*

tion. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn."*

The contrite heart then, is a heart, which is deeply touched with a sense of God's goodness, and of its own vileness; which abhors and loathes itself; which cannot find words or actions to express its detestation of its own enormity; which, while it may hope to be forgiven of God, cannot forgive itself.—Such is the state of heart described in the text. To obtain still clearer notions on the subject, we may refer to some of those instances, which the scriptures furnish, of this broken spirit, this contrite heart. David indeed in his own example gives a very exact representation of that state of heart which he is describing. If we read over this fifty-first psalm; we shall see throughout the breathing of a soul humbled under a deep sense of sin, bitterly mourning on account of it, taking to itself the whole shame and guilt, and pleading only for grace and mercy. We have another instance of the same abased and penitent state of heart in the thirty-first chapter of the prophet Jeremiah; where Ephraim is described as "bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and I shall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Take another instance from the description given of the publican, who "standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven; but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner." Look again at the prodigal son. Judge what was the state of his heart, when he had determined to return home, and in these words to express the penitent feelings of his soul, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." To mention only one other example. Let us notice the account of, "the woman, which was a sinner; who when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his

* Zechariah xii. 10.

feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment."* In all these instances we see the effects of a broken and a contrite heart: how it works; how it shews itself; what it leads persons to do and to say: and hence we may more clearly and distinctly perceive what it is: what is that state of heart spoken of in the text. I proceed to shew,

II. The favour with which God regards it.

David calls this broken spirit, this contrite heart "*the sacrifices of God.*" In reading the psalms of David we must bear in mind that though his religion was in fact the same as ours; yet he would naturally describe it in language suited to the way in which it was then revealed. Thus it is, that he here speaks of the broken and the contrite heart as being a *sacrifice of God.* He was accustomed to the use of sacrifices; and he employed this word on the present occasion, because it, most naturally to him, expressed the idea which he wished to convey. Let us see what this idea was. The first and chief end of the sacrifices, as appointed by God, was to teach the Jews the great doctrine of an atonement; or that "without shedding of blood is no remission."† The innocent animals being slain and burnt on the altar, shewed the necessity of some sacrifice being offered up to divine justice in the place, and on the behalf of sinners. The first idea then, which the word sacrifice would express, is that of an *atonement for sin.* This however is not the idea, which David here meant to convey. He never meant to say that a broken and a contrite heart is an *atonement for sin.* He knew, as fully as we know now, that there is no real atonement for sin, but the blood of that *one great Sacrifice* which, in due time, was to be offered up on the cross for the sin of the world, and which all the Jewish sacrifices represented and shadowed forth. He knew, as fully as we know now, that humiliation for sin however deep, and contrition however sincere, could make no satisfaction to the divine justice. In this sense then he did not speak of them as a sacrifice. But there is another sense in which the broken and contrite heart might be

* Luke xviii. 13.—xv. 18, 19.—vii. 37, 38. † Hebrews ix. 22.

called a sacrifice. While the sacrifices in part were typical atonements for sin, they were also acts of worship, expressive of the mind of the worshipper. They implied on his part, an acknowledgment of guilt, faith in the promised Saviour, and devotedness to God. Many of them also were free-will offerings, which shewed the pious feelings of such as brought them. In themselves indeed, they were of no real value: they did God no service: but yet as coming from a willing mind, and sanctified by the blood of the altar, they were graciously accepted by God. And here then we see what is meant by *sacrifice* in the text. The broken and the contrite heart, though in itself worthless and unserviceable, yet when presented in faith, and sanctified by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, is a sacrifice pleasing to God. It is *all* that the sinner has to offer; and when *thus* offered it will be favourably received. God "will *not despise it*," says David in the text. There is great force in this expression. It means far more than at first sight it seems to do. "A *broken* and a *contrite* heart, O God! Thou wilt not despise:" *Others* may despise it, but *God* will not.

The poor broken-hearted sinner often despises himself. He looks upon himself as worthless and despicable before God. He is so sunk in his own esteem, that he considers his heart as an offering utterly beneath God's notice, and deserving only of his abhorrence. But God does not so regard it. He values it highly. It is a sight which he delights to see. He beholds nothing in this world, which gives him so much pleasure as a broken and a contrite heart. Hear his own words to this effect, "Thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I *dwell* in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit:" and again, "To this man will I *look*, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."* Such a man indeed is often despised by his fellow-creatures. They mistake his character and regard him with contempt. But God's "thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways." The proud self-righteous pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican. Even in his

* Isaiah lvii. 15.—lxii. 2.

acts of devotion, he could not abstain from speaking of him with contempt; "God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." But God did not approve these words. He did not despise the Publican. It is expressly said, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Thus in like manner Simon the pharisee despised the weeping penitent who came into his house, and condemned the expressions of her godly sorrow. But Jesus did not despise her. He did not contemn her anxiety and tears. He graciously testified his acceptance of her services. He shewed that her broken and contrite heart was a sacrifice not displeasing to him. He said to her in the presence of all the guests, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

What consolation, what encouragement does this view of the subject afford, to every one whose state of heart answers to that described in the text; to every contrite, broken-hearted sinner. Poor, and afflicted soul! Thou writest bitter things against thyself. Thou labourest and art heavy-laden. Thou art weighed down under a sense of thy guilt and corruption. A sight of thy sins has greatly affected thee. Once, thou didst not believe that thou wast so evil. But now thine eyes are opened. Thou seest thine iniquities, and lookest upon them with shame and sorrow. Once thou stoodest high in thine own conceit. Thou thoughtest (presumptuous thought!) that thou hadst some worthiness before God. But now thy thoughts are changed. Thou art fallen, deeply fallen, in thine own estimation. Instead of being worthy before God, thou feelest that thou art worthless in his sight. Thou abhorrest the very mention, the very thought of worthiness. The lamentation of the Prophet, the confession of Job, seems to suit thee best. "Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips." "Behold I am vile. I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."*—But amidst all thy humiliation and self-abasement, know to thy comfort, that God doth not despise thee. Thou condemnest thyself, but God does not condemn thee. Nay far from despising thee, he accounts thee precious. The lower thou art sunk in thy own esteem, the higher thou art risen in his.

* Isaiah vi. 5. Job xl. 4.—xlii. 6.

When thou thoughtest thyself to be something, thou wast abhorred of him. But now, that thou lookest upon thyself as a "very worm and no man," he regards thee with favour and delight. Far from condemning thee, he acquits thee of every charge. Now that thou condemnest thyself, he justifies thee freely. He says to thee; "Son be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." He stops thy self-reproaches, as the compassionate Father stopped those of his returning son. He welcomes thee home. He "rejoices over thee with joy:" for thou "wast lost, but art found: thou wast dead but art alive again." Let not these rich comforts be offered thee in vain. May the Lord enable thee to apply them! Look to Jesus thy Saviour for help and peace. He will not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoaking flax." Go to *him* for comfort; and he will not leave thee comfortless. He will bind up the broken heart, and will heal the wounded spirit. He will "give thee beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Thou hast not far to go to him: for he is near, even at the door. He waiteth to be gracious. He knocks at thy heart for entrance. Refuse him not admission. Shut not out thy comforter. He comes to comfort and to save thee. He "is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

But, my brethren, while this passage gives such consolation to the penitent, what does it say to persons of a contrary character: to those, whose hearts are proud; whose consciences are hard; who think highly of themselves, and despise the humble whom God approves: who dare to talk of their goodness; to excuse their sins; to say, that they have done little, or perhaps even no harm; who far from trembling at God's word, regard not his threatenings: attend not to his precepts, feel no compunction at the commission, or the recollection even of flagrant sins; and in the midst of irreligion and impenitence, promise to themselves peace, and say that they are in no danger? What, I ask, does the text say to such persons? It in fact says to them; "Behold ye despisers and tremble and perish." It speaks to them nothing but terror. It gives to them in their present state no hope.

Nay, continuing as they are, it shuts them out from all hope. It reminds them that while God despiseth not the humble, he abhors the proud; that while the broken heart is an offering acceptable to him, the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord. It reminds them, that while the tears, and sighs, the self-condemnation, and penitent groanings of the contrite soul come up before *him* as incense of a sweet-smelling savour; the unmeaning confessions, the heartless worship, the hypocritical prayers of the impenitent and unhumbled are in the highest degree offensive in his sight, and provoke his most righteous indignation. Be alarmed then for your safety, ye stout hearted. Tremble at your awful state. The great the mighty God, who made you, who, in a moment, can destroy you, and can plunge both body and soul into hell; *He is against you. He is your enemy.* May these words sink into your heart! May God by his spirit work in you a better mind!" "For how long will ye refuse to humble yourselves before him?" Humble yourselves and he will lift you up.

SERMON XXIX.

DANGER OF INTEMPERANCE AND WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS.

Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.—*Luke* xxi. 24.

THE scriptures leave untried no probable means of conveying instruction. They teach by precept and example. They admonish, reprove, threaten, and encourage; and employ every argument, which may be likely to make an impression on the mind. At one time, they cheer us by comfortable promises; at another, they put us on our guard by seasonable admonitions. It is this latter way which our Saviour used in the text: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be over-

charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

In discoursing on these words let us consider,

I. The danger mentioned.

II. The caution given concerning it.

I. The danger mentioned is this—"Lest that day come upon you unawares"—*What* day does our Saviour here mean? When speaking to the Jews he probably meant in the first place, *that* day when the Romans would destroy their city and nation. But in the full sense of the passage, we must understand him as speaking of *another* day; a day in which we are all deeply concerned, the day of judgment: *that* day, when "the dead small and great shall stand before God; and the books shall be opened; and the dead shall be judged out of those things, which are written in the books according to their works."*—It is not however necessary to confine the meaning, even to this day. For since every man, when he goes out of the world, enters on an eternal state of happiness or misery, to him the day of his death, is in fact the same with the day of judgment. At the day of judgment indeed, his body having been raised, and joined again to his soul, his sentence will be publicly pronounced, and the complete execution of it will take place. But still at the day of his death, his character and state will be determined, and his happiness or misery will begin. No sooner was Lazarus dead, but he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man died, and was buried: but in the mean time he lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments. To both these persons the day, in which they died, was *that* day, spoken of in the text. And to all of us the same truth applies. To all of us the day, on which we shall die, will be *that* day meant in the text.—The danger is "lest it should come upon us *unawares*."

What are we to understand by this expression? When may this day be said to come on us *unawares*?—It may be said to come on us *unawares*, when it comes at a time in which we are not looking for its coming; when it comes on us suddenly, and takes us by surprise. This statement, however, requires some explanation. The danger, men-

* Rev. xx. 12.

tioned in the text, does not arise merely from death coming suddenly. Many good men have *died suddenly;* perhaps at an hour, when they have not thought of dying, and were in no immediate expectation of death. But its coming even under such circumstances has not been dangerous to *them*, because they have been in an *habitual* state of readiness for its coming. While the bridegroom tarried the wise virgins slumbered and slept. On this account they were to be blamed: but yet, when the cry was made that the bridegroom was coming, they trimmed their lamps, and were taken to the feast. Notwithstanding their unseasonable slumber, they were *habitually* prepared for the bridegroom's coming. They had oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps. But it was not so with the foolish virgins. While they slumbered and slept, they had made no preparation for the coming of the bridegroom. They had pretended to be waiting for him. They had taken their lamps: but they had no oil with them in their vessels. Therefore he indeed came *unawares* on *them.* He took them by surprise, when they had made no provision for his coming; and consequently being unprovided for it, and having now no means of making preparation, they were shut out from the marriage-feast.

From this way of explaining the subject it appears, that the expression, of *that day coming upon us unawares*, intends not so much the *suddenness* of its coming, as the *state* in which on coming, it shall find us. The danger mentioned, is not in our being taken away at *a minute's warning*, but in our being removed hence in an *unprepared state:* not in our dying at a *moment* when we are not thinking of death; but in our dying at a time, when we are wholly *unfit* for death. This is to die *unawares.* This is the *danger* spoken of in the text.—And O my brethren, what danger have we so much reason to dread as this? To die in an *unprepared* state; to die at a time when we are *unfit* for death, to have that day thus come upon us unawares; how dreadful would it be! Think of the unspeakable disappointment, woe, and anguish, of being torn at once from all our joys and pleasures; of passing from this world of light and hope into a place of darkness and despair; of awakening from our sinful stupor and finding ourselves in hell! Think of the inconceivable

horror of being dragged before the throne of our holy and offended Maker, without having made any preparation for standing before him with acceptance! To be called into his presence, with all the burden of our unpardoned sins upon our heads, with our souls filthy and impure; full of evil passions and unholy tempers! To be commanded to account for our waste of gifts and talents, for our abuse of time and mercies, for our transgressions of the law, for our contempt of the Gospel; for our neglect of Christ, for our despite done unto the spirit of grace! Who can estimate the misery, the horror of such a moment? God forbid, that we may ever feel it! May that day never come upon us unawares! May we escape the danger mentioned in the text! To this end let us consider,

II. The caution given, "Take heed to yourselves." Would we escape the danger, we must be on our guard against it. If that day should come upon us unawares, it will be our own fault: it will be through our own negligence in not preparing for its coming. We have sufficient notice of its approach. We have full warning to prepare for its arrival. We are plainly told what preparation is required, and how great is the danger of being unprepared. Have we not need then of circumspection and watchfulness? Does not our Saviour with great reason, admonish us *to take heed* unto ourselves, lest that day come upon us unawares?

But besides the general admonition, he mentions two evils, against which he would especially guard us, as tending in a peculiar manner to harden the heart, and to make us unfit for death; namely, the indulgence of sensual appetites, and an immoderate care about worldly things: "Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and *so* that day come upon you unawares." To have our heart overcharged with these things, is to have it filled with them, and devoted to them; to be wholly taken up in enjoying or following them; and the necessary consequence of such a state must be a want of preparation for death. Can the man, whose heart is overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, be ready to die? If death find him sunk in these sensual pleasures, must it not come upon him unawares? "Drunkenness, revellings

and such like" are expressly ranked among those works of the flesh, of which it is positively said, that "they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* Besides intemperance is a sin, which naturally unfits the heart for receiving serious truth, and makes it deaf to the voice of God. *Fleshly lusts* are those, which above all others "war against the soul." They more particularly grieve and provoke the Holy Spirit of God: and therefore it is, that when the apostle exhorts the Ephesians to be "filled with the Spirit," he at the same time admonishes them "not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess."† Indeed the judgment of God seems in a very remarkable manner to overtake the persons, who indulge in such excesses. Experience proves, that of all the wretched slaves of Satan, drunkards are the least frequently recovered out of his snare. There is more hope of every description of sinners, than of the man, who "rises up early in the morning that he may follow strong drink; who counteth it his pleasure to riot in the day-time; and continueth until night till wine inflame him." He often appears to be judicially hardened: and we must surely admit the justice of God, in leaving such a man to the consequences of his sin. He is labouring to destroy his reason, that noble gift of God to man; to extinguish in his soul that light, which the Almighty has put into it for the most valuable purposes; to bring himself down to a level with the brutes, nay to a degree far below them, for they carry not their animal enjoyments to excess: and what wonder is it, if the Almighty should leave such a person to his wicked choice; should stupify his conscience; should blind his understanding, and suffer him to perish as ignorant of God and as thoughtless about his soul, as the brutes themselves? The heart of the drunken Nabal "died within him, and he became as a stone."‡ And how many drunken Nabals are there in the world! How many, it is to be feared, who, falling into the snare of the devil, "have ears and hear not, have eyes and see not;" who with a stupid unconcern, mock at serious things; and suffer that day to come upon them unawares. O my brethren! take heed to yourselves, lest *your* hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. "If sinners

* Gal. v. 25. † Ephes. v. 18. ‡ 1 Samuel xxv. 37.

entice, consent ye not." Remember, death standeth at the door. Let it not come upon *you* unawares. "Be sober and watch unto prayer."

An *immoderate care*, about worldly objects is another evil, against which you are cautioned to guard. "Take heed unto yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with the *cares of this life*." It is not a proper and necessary attention to our worldly concerns, against which we are here warned. Such an attention is a part of our duty, which it would be criminal to neglect. It is an *immoderate care*, which is here meant. It is making the world our God. It is being so taken up with worldly business, as to bestow on it all our time, and thoughts, and talents. It is to be so engaged with providing for the present life as to allow ourselves no leisure, or not enough leisure for providing for the life to come. How many persons are thus *overcharged with the cares of this life!* "They rise up early and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," as if they were born for no other purpose but to provide for their perishing bodies; as if to add field to field, and to join house to house were the only things deserving their concern. But while thus given up to the world, are they in a state of preparation for death? Surely they are not. Such an immoderate desire after earthly things is declared in the scriptures to be covetousness: and covetousness is expressly called idolatry: and idolaters, it is no less expressly said, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."* Indeed while men's hearts are thus *overcharged with the cares of this life*, death cannot but come upon them unawares, and find them wholly unfit for its approach. For this love of the world, naturally shuts out the love of God from the heart; while at the same time it draws men into many sinful practices, and direct transgressions of the divine law. So true are the words of St. Paul to Timothy, that "they who *will* be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."†

In application then of the subject before us, let me

* Luke xii. 15. Col. iii. 5. Rev. xxi. 8. † 1 Tim. vi. 9.

endeavour, my brethren, to enforce our Saviour's admonition upon you.

In the first place, let me exhort you to guard against that worldly-mindedness; that *immoderate* anxiety about worldly things, of which we have been speaking. It is a state of heart, to which you are naturally prone; and in defence of which you can urge many plausible reasons. On these accounts the danger to be feared from it, is the greater, and the necessity of a seasonable admonition the stronger.

You may say, that you 'are poor and have your bread to earn; that you have a family to maintain; that the times are hard, and expences great.'—But admitting all these statements to be true; to what do they amount? They amount to a strong reason why you should be diligent and active and prudent; but they do not amount to any reason, why you should be so *overcharged* with the cares of this life, as to be guilty of neglecting the concerns of the next. They require you to be industrious, frugal, and attentive to your business; but they do not require you to forget God; to be so cumbered about many things as to neglect the one thing needful. You are expressly commanded to "seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness:" to seek them *first;* above all other things, before all other things; in preference to all other things; to make all other things give way to them; and to manage all other things with an eye to them.

Perhaps you will say, 'that it is *impossible* to act in this manner, and according to this rule: that worldly affairs cannot on this principle be successfully managed.'—I answer that what is impossible with man, is possible with God. He prescribes to us no duty, which he will not enable us to discharge: if we earnestly pray to him for strength. It is probable indeed that by following the direction given, you may not grow rich so quickly as you would otherwise do: you may not fare quite so well as your ungodly and worldly neighbours: you may meet with some disappointments and losses. But if you do not follow this direction, one point is clear, that you are under the government of a worldly spirit, and are actuated by an immoderate anxiety about worldly things. And if such be your condition, how great is your

danger! You are liable, every day to all the dreadful consequences of dying in a state unprepared for death. You are liable this night, to have your soul required of you. Then whose will those things be which you have provided? What will they profit you, when you shall stand before God? They will not yield you any comfort or help in that day. Nay, they will rise up in judgment against you. They have here filled your heart, which ought to have been given to God. They have been your idols, which you have loved and worshipped instead of God. Consequently, they will appear against you to your utter and unspeakable confusion.—Take heed then, my brethren, "lest that day come upon you unawares." Be not overcharged with the cares of life. Pray for that faith, by which you may overcome the world. Seek after an interest in that Saviour, by whose "cross the world may be crucified unto you, and you unto the world."

With equal earnestness, let me also admonish you, to guard against that indulgence of sensual appetite spoken of in the text. You have seen the danger of having your heart overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; lest death should overtake you in that state. Beware then how you expose yourselves to so great a hazard. As to habitual drunkards, who "make a God of their belly," and "riot even in the day-time," there is indeed but little hope of making a serious impression on such persons. Dreadfully hardened as they must be in the ways of sin, and completely led captive by the devil, there is but little probability of their listening to the voice of friendly admonitions. But who can tell, whether God may not bless the attempt, and "peradventure may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that they may deliver themselves out of this snare of the devil." Consider, my brethren, before it is too late for consideration, consider your danger. Standing on the brink of eternal torments, you are daring the Almighty to plunge you into them. You are saying 'I fear not God nor his wrath:' 'I will have my pleasures, though hell be my portion for ever'—And consider how soon it *may* be your portion. You have no security, but that the very next day in which you gratify your favourite lust, may be *that day* spoken of in the text; *that* day, which will turn all

your joy into the most horrible misery, all your presumptuous hopes into utter despair; and will plunge you for ever into those flames, where not one drop of water will be given to cool your burning tongue. If with these awful considerations thus solemnly urged, you can persist in your abominable practices, what more can be done to save you? Remember, that you have been seriously, that you have been affectionately warned. If you should perish (which God forbid!) you will perish without excuse. Have pity upon yourselves; have pity upon your miserable souls. Why will ye die?

But there are others also, who need the admonition, and to whom it may be addressed with more hope of success. I mean those, who being *habitually* free from the sin of drunkenness, are yet *occasionally* guilty of it: who allow themselves *sometimes* to run into excess; and think that the return of certain seasons and circumstances will excuse their conduct; or who suppose that because the sin is seldom committed, it is therefore little. —But let me earnestly intreat you to beware of giving way to such false reasoning. No sin is little: and no allowed sin can be justified or excused. Remark the expression in the text, "Take heed to yourselves lest *at any time* your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness:" *at any time;* no exception is made in favour of even an *occasional* excess. In fact, if you are allowedly guilty of even an occasional excess, you are exposing yourself to the danger mentioned in the text. For can you be in a state prepared for dying, while you are wilfully and knowingly suffering yourself to fall into intemperance? Awake from this fatal slumber. Break off your sins and especially this sin, by repentance. It may cost you some trouble. It may put you to some pain. You may find it difficult to withstand the intreaties of friends, or the scoffs and ridicule of ungodly persons, who will "think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot speaking evil of you."* But regard not these things. Let the fear of *that day* coming upon you unawares be deeply impressed on your heart; "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth"—"Watch ye therefore and pray

* 1 Peter iv. 4.

always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

SERMON XXX.

REBECCA'S IMPOSITION ON ISAAC CONSIDERED.

And his mother said unto him, upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice.—*Genesis* xxvii. 13.

THE chapter, from which these words are taken, contains an interesting portion of scripture history. It relates the artifice, which Jacob, by the advice of his mother, practised for obtaining his father's blessing. The text, in particular, sets before us Rebecca's answer, when Jacob, hesitating to comply with her proposal, had expressed his fears of bringing upon himself a curse and not a blessing. She said unto him, "Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice."

Rebecca was, on the whole, a woman of undoubted piety. In this transaction however, she appears in an unfavourable light. She is represented as engaged in an attempt to deceive her husband, and by fraud, to procure for her younger son, the blessing which Isaac intended for his first-born Esau. In this attempt indeed, she did not act the principal part; but she was the author and adviser of it. It was undertaken at her suggestion, and executed by her contrivance. She may be considered as the prime cause and mover in the business; and though Jacob was justly chargeable with a part of the guilt, yet Rebecca is described as willingly taking the whole of it on herself: "Upon me be thy curse, my son."

This language plainly shews, that she thought her conduct justifiable: and thus we have a melancholy instance of the way, in which good people sometimes deceive themselves, and suffer their judgments to be misled by carnal reasonings, and the counsels of the natural heart.

In order, however, to obtain a clear insight into

Rebecca's conduct, on this occasion, two things are to be considered,

I. The *object* which she had in view.

II. The *means* which she used for attaining it.

I. Isaac, being now old, having lost his sight, and hastening, as he supposed, towards his end, was desirous of settling his family-concerns, that he might not have any troubles of this kind to disturb him at the nearer approach of death. Among these concerns, the most important was the disposal of the blessing, which, by divine direction had been conferred on him by his father Abraham. This blessing was of a peculiar kind. It included all those special blessings which God had engaged to bestow on Abraham and his seed. It comprehended the promise of the Messiah, and of the land of Canaan; and was typical also of spiritual and eternal blessings. Now this blessing, it might be supposed, would naturally go to the first-born. For which reason, and perhaps, from a blameable partiality to Esau, Isaac designed to bestow it on him: and accordingly gave him directions to prepare for the receiving of it. No sooner however, was Rebecca acquainted with her husband's intention than she resolved, if possible, to defeat it. *She* wished the blessing to go, not to Esau the first-born, but to Jacob her younger son. And what, may we ask was the reason of this preference? Did she love Jacob best? It is probable that she did. His piety would greatly endear him to his mother, and would make him a peculiar comfort to her declining years: while the irreligious conduct of Esau had caused her much uneasiness, and had probably, in some degree weakened her attachment to him. Pious parents will carefully guard against indulging an undue partiality for one child above another; at the same time, it is hardly possible, but that their affection will be strongest towards such as prove themselves most deserving of it.—But in the present instance, Rebecca might have another motive for wishing that the blessing should be given to Jacob. She knew that he was fittest for receiving it. She knew that he highly valued it, not merely for the sake of any worldly benefit annexed to it, but on account of the spiritual promises contained in it. Esau, on the contrary, had repeatedly shewn the greatest contempt

for the blessing and its promises. On one occasion, he had expressly parted with his interest in them, and had profanely sold it to his brother for a mess of pottage. In another instance, by taking to himself wives from the idolatrous nations of Canaan, he had plainly shewed that he neither desired the blessing of Abraham, nor dreaded the wrath of God.—But even this reason, however sufficient it might have been, was not, we may conjecture, the chief motive, by which Rebecca's mind was influenced. She had a still stronger reason for wishing to defeat her husband's purpose. She felt assured that in this design, he was opposing the will and purpose of the Almighty.

God had long ago declared, in answer to her enquiry, even before the children had been born, that, "the elder should serve the younger.*" This declaration, which in fact, conveyed the blessing to Jacob, had been carefully treasured in her memory: and though now, either through infirmity forgotten, or through partiality overlooked by Isaac, was still remembered by her. In desiring therefore, to prevent his design from taking place and in attempting to procure the blessing for Jacob in preference to Esau, she knew that she was only desiring to do what God had designed should be done, and was merely attempting to fulfil those purposes, which by revelation he had disclosed to her. Her desire then was good and her attempt praise-worthy. The end which she proposed to herself was to prevent her husband from acting contrary to the divine will, and to assist in turning the blessing, where God intended it should go. So far then as the *object*, which she had in view, was concerned, far from finding any thing to blame we see much to commend. It sprang from her faith and piety and shewed her zeal for the glory of God.—Let us consider,

II. The *means* which she used for attaining this object.

No sooner had she conceived her purpose, than she formed a plan for accomplishing it. She had overheard her husband's directions to Esau, that he should "go and take some venison, and make savoury meat, such as his father loved, that he might eat and bless him before he died." She knew that some time would probably pass, before these directions could be fulfilled. Esau

* Genesis xxv. 23.

would be kept at a distance from home in procuring the venison. In the mean while, advantage might be taken of his absence and of Isaac's blindness, to impose Jacob upon his father in his brother Esau's stead. Such was her plan. Nothing was wanting to complete it but Jacob's consent; and having overcome his scruples, by promising to take all the consequences on herself, she instantly proceeded to execute her purpose. She took two kids and made savoury meat such as Isaac loved. She took goodly raiment of her son Esau, which were with her in the house and put them on Jacob, that his father might be deceived by the smell of the raiment. She covered the hands of Jacob and the smooth of his neck with the skins of the goats, that so he might be more like his brother, who was a hairy man: and thus prepared she sent Jacob unto his father Isaac to pretend that he was his first-born Esau, and under this false character to obtain the blessing and supplant his brother.

These were the *means* which she used to attain her object. And would they had been such, that we could approve and praise! Here however we are forced to withhold our commendation: nay, we must go further, we must positively condemn her conduct, and declare it to have been utterly without excuse. We say nothing of the probability, which there was of a discovery and of the dangerous consequences which might have followed. Admitting that a discovery was very unlikely to take place; admitting that her plan was most wisely laid with every prospect of success; yet of what kind was her wisdom? Was it that wisdom "which is from above, and which is first pure, and then peaceable, full of good fruits, and without hypocrisy?" Or rather was it not that wisdom "which descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish?"* Was it that wisdom, which our Lord prescribes, when he says, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves?" Or rather, was it not the crooked policy of the old serpent, who is a liar and the father of lies? Rebecca, indeed, could not but know, that to impose on her husband by means of his infirmity, and to tempt her son to the commission of falsehood and deception, were acts, which in themselves were highly sinful.

* James iii, 15, 17.

What may we suppose then were the arguments, by which she would probably defend and even justify her conduct? She would say to herself, 'I am placed in very extraordinary circumstances. Here is Isaac about to act in direct opposition to the divine will. Here is the blessing, which God has designed for Jacob, on the point of being given to Esau. Is it not my duty to prevent the purposes of the Almighty from being defeated? Though the means, to which I may have recourse, are such, as on a *common* occasion might not be lawfully used, yet does not the *necessity* of the present case, allow and even require me to use them?'—But how vain and false would such reasoning be! What permission had Rebecca received "to do evil, that good might come?" Her duty was to be learned not from the *purposes*, but from the *precepts* of the Almighty. Did she suppose that God could not complete his designs, without her committing sin in order to fulfil them? Or did she think that sin would not be sin, because she dressed it in this specious covering?

My brethren, there is the greater necessity for exposing and condemning the fallacy of this reasoning; because it is a way of reasoning frequently used and defended in the world. The standard of duty is oftentimes very little understood and regarded, even by those, who make stronger pretensions than others to the character of moral persons. Forgetting that the perfect law of God is to be the only rule of all their thoughts, words, and actions, they argue and act, on some occasions, as if they had the liberty of setting up another rule in the place of this. They seem to think that if the *end* which they have in view, be good, it is of no great consequence by what *means* they follow it. Let us suppose for instance, that some object in itself very desirable, which promises much good to man, and much glory to God, may probably be attained: but in order to attain it, as in Rebecca's case, some dishonesty, falsehood, or prevarication appears to be necessary. Now the law of God strictly forbids every practice of this kind; and consequently commands us to give up all thoughts of attaining the object, however desirable, by such means. But the persons in question, deny this conclusion. They say, 'The *end* will justify the *means*. Though the means be unlawful, yet the end is in itself so

good, that it is no sin to use them.' Let us meet this reasoning fairly. Let us see whether it may not be brought to justify the commission of every possible sin. If you may break one part of the divine law to obtain a good end; your neighbour for the same reason may break another. If you may deceive or lie, because by falsehood or deceit you may think that you can do some good; another, on the same principle, may forswear himself and kill, if perjury and murder appear to be necessary means for accomplishing some desirable object. The reasoning, in both instances, rests on the same grounds; and if it be sound in one case, what prevents it from being so in the other also? Perhaps you answer, 'The cases stated are extreme. 'Perjury and murder are sins so great, that no end, however good, can justify the commission of them.' While I admit the force of this conclusion; in return, I would enquire; Where have you learned that any sin is little? Be assured that all sins in themselves are great. They are all committed against God. They are all breaches of his law. He who has forbidden us to kill, or take his name in vain, has equally forbidden us to deceive or lie. The attainment of an end, however good, will no more justify us in practising falsehood, than in committing murder. In all cases the law of God is to be our rule. In no case can we claim the privilege of setting it aside. Rebecca's sin, however she might excuse it to herself, was sufficient to have ruined her soul: and unquestionably, unless through God's grace, she had afterwards repented and obtained forgiveness, it would have ruined her soul. Such is the case with every sin. Whatever good may come of the evil which we do, that good will not excuse the evil nor make it less—But it may be further said; 'Rebecca's plan succeeded. Jacob by his deception obtained the blessing: and thus God, by making the means successful, shewed that he approved them.'—It is true that God permitted Rebecca's plan to be successful: but it does not therefore follow that he approved it. Indeed, it is utterly impossible that he could approve falsehood in any shape or in any case. He permitted it to be practised, and he overruled it for the fulfilling of his own purposes: but this is a very different thing from approving it. God overrules the

counsels of the wicked, and makes them work together for his own glory: but, can we suppose that he approves them? When the traitor Judas betrayed his master Jesus; when the Jews, demanding his blood, brought him before Pilate; when Pilate delivered him to be crucified; they all helped to the accomplishment of that great work, which God had before determined should be done. But, did he therefore approve their conduct in doing it? Far otherwise: he decidedly condemned it. Thus, though Rebecca thought to promote the divine glory: yet, as the Lord did not require, so neither could he approve the means to which she had recourse. Nay, if we attentively examine the whole matter, in all its effects and consequences; we shall discover clear marks of God's displeasure against both her and Jacob, for their parts in this transaction. The enmity, which Esau conceived against his brother for having thus supplanted him in Isaac's blessing; and his avowed determination of hereafter avenging the injury, filled Rebecca's heart with the most distressing fears for Jacob's life; till at length, in order to provide for his safety, she was forced to send him into a distant land, and to be utterly separated from him for above twenty years. In these family-afflictions, she would see the righteous consequences of her carnal policy, and would doubtless, bitterly lament the improper step, which she had taken.—As for Jacob, in the danger to which his life was exposed under his father's roof from Esau's murderous wrath; in the imposition, which he himself suffered in respect to Rachel whom he loved; in the various hardships, which he endured in Laban's service; and in the terror, which on his return, he felt at the approach of Esau, lest he should "smite him, and the mother with the children;" in all these troubles and distresses, which were the evident consequences of the deception practised on his father, Jacob would read the divine displeasure against his sin, and would feelingly learn, that the law of God, is not under any pretence to be broken with impunity; even where the eternal punishment incurred may be mercifully remitted. Sin ever brings along with it shame and sorrow: and those who permit themselves to do evil, that good may come, will surely, in the end, deplore their worldly wisdom, and presumptuous conduct.

It may yet however be further asked, 'What ought Rebecca to have done? Was she knowingly, to have let her husband act contrary to the divine intentions, without endeavouring to prevent him? Was she to have taken no step, in order to have procured the blessing for Jacob?' I answer, There were means, which she might lawfully have used for the attainment of her end; and to these she ought to have confined herself. She should have reasoned the matter with Isaac. She should meekly have pointed out to him the mistake which he was on the point of committing. She should have reminded him of the revelation, which God had given of his will in this affair; and thus, by persuasion and argument she should have endeavoured to turn him from his purpose. There is no reason for thinking but that such a conduct would probably have answered. Isaac, when he afterwards discovered what had been done, appears to have suddenly recollected himself; and shuddering at the danger from which he had escaped, in a very striking manner, confirmed the blessing to Jacob: "*Yea*, and he *shall* be blessed."—It is therefore likely, that he would before have yielded to a mild remonstrance, affectionately urged. At any rate, Rebecca should have tried this way. She should have added also to it strong faith and fervent prayer. These are the weapons of our warfare. With these arms, she would have prevailed as certainly, as she could hope to do by her own crooked policy. By using these means, she would have honoured God; and instead of bringing on herself guilt and shame, and sorrow, would have laid the foundation for future peace and joy.

On the whole, my brethren, let us diligently cultivate that simplicity and sincerity of conduct, which the Gospel of Christ enjoins. Let us "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Let us have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Let us not follow a good end by forbidden means: nor think to justify sin, by saying, that we are doing God service. God is not to be so served. Especially, let us watch over our heart, which is "deceitful above all things." Let us not listen to its carnal suggestions. Let us bring every thing to the standard of God's law. When deliberating on any doubtful step let us not ask, 'What will be the consequence?

Will the *end* be good or bad?' Rather let us ask, 'What say the scriptures? May this step be lawfully taken or not?' Let us be earnest and constant in prayer for light and direction from above: and may the Lord preserve us from all evil and keep us to his heavenly kingdom!

SERMON XXXI.

ST. PAUL A PATTERN OF THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy; that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.—1 *Timothy* i. 16.

THE character of St. Paul on many accounts is highly deserving of our attention. His constant labours, his successful ministry, his Christian attainments must ever be regarded with admiration, delight, and profit. The circumstance however, which most powerfully claims our notice, is his miraculous conversion, or that exceeding abundant grace, which was vouchsafed in bringing him from darkness to light, and in making him a believer and even a preacher of that Gospel, which he had before denied and persecuted. The consideration of this extraordinary event is full of instruction, but especially it sets before us the most encouraging display of God's rich mercy towards sinners. It is this view of the subject, which St. Paul himself gives in the text. Having spoken in very strong terms of his own unworthiness and guilt, he adds; "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy; that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

In considering this passage, let us fix our thoughts on two particulars contained in it.

I. The mercy, which St. Paul obtained.

II. The cause, for which he obtained it.

I. To say that any one sinner has more pretensions to God's mercy than another, would be to talk absurdly: for no sinner can have *any* pretensions to mercy. Mercy in its nature and its operations is wholly free. It is favour shewn to objects, who in themselves are utterly unworthy of it. Sinners indeed, may greatly differ in their degrees of guilt. But still the least guilty sinner can lay no *claim* to the divine compassion: for in that case to shew compassion to him would be an act, not of *mercy*, but of *justice*. In this respect all sinners are on a level. They all need mercy, and they must all receive it as a free gift; which none deserve, and to which therefore no one can have better pretensions than another.

But while we admit this truth, it is no contradiction to say, that some sinners stand in need of greater mercy than others; that some, according to our view of things, are less likely to obtain mercy than others; that some, having contracted guilt of a deeper dye, require a larger measure of grace to absolve and cleanse them, than others, whose sins are comparatively of a lighter hue. To pardon the least sinner is great mercy: but to pardon a sinner, who has *long* resisted the calls of grace, who has sinned with a *high* hand, and has *hardened* himself in wickedness; to pardon a sinner of this kind would be still greater mercy. Such an act of grace would more strikingly shew the riches of divine love. Now such is the act of grace, which St. Paul considers to have been shewn in his favour. While he tells us, that he "obtained mercy;" he yet speaks of himself, as of all men the least likely to have obtained it; yea, of all men, as he thought, the most unfit to obtain it. "*Howbeit* I obtained mercy."—This is a way of speaking which implies, that there were in his case, some peculiar circumstances, which made it more difficult, at least less probable, for him to obtain mercy than for others; circumstances therefore, which, when mercy was obtained, proved it to have been beyond measure, great and wonderful. Let us see what these circumstances were. They, in fact, are all contained in two particulars; the character and conduct of the apostle before he obtained mercy.

In speaking of St. Paul's character and conduct before his conversion to christianity, we have good ground for

saying, that he was in a more than common degree a sinner. He tells us himself, under a deep conviction of his guilt, that he was "the chief of sinners." And indeed he declares the same thing in the text, when he says "unto me first Jesus Christ shewed forth all long-suffering;" that is unto me *first*, not in order of time, not before others in this sense; for many had thus obtained mercy before St. Paul; but first in *rank*, in *guilt*, in *eminence* as a *sinner:* unto me, who have sinned more than others, and stand foremost in the list of obstinate offenders.

But what had been St. Paul's peculiar guilt before his conversion to christianity? Had he been an idolater, or a publican? Had he been a drunkard, a fornicator, or a slave to his licentious appetites? Had he been unjust, dishonest, or covetous? Had he oppressed the poor, the fatherless, or the widow? Had he polluted the Sabbath? Had he openly expressed his contempt and disregard of religious duties? Was it in all, or in any of these respects that he had been thus eminently guilty? No: not in one of them. We have reason to believe that in all these respects he had been far better than the generality of men. "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, he had been blameless."*

Does this appear strange to us? Does it seem difficult to understand how St. Paul, though neither an idolater, nor a publican, though neither an immoral nor a profane person, might yet have been, and even was, the chief of sinners? The reason is, we are accustomed to judge of sin merely by the outward act. We are apt to measure the guilt of the sinner, merely by the injury which he does to his fellow-creatures. We forget that sin begins in the heart, and that it may be conceived and brought forth there, notwithstanding that it does not shew itself in any outward act. We forget that the sinfulness of sin consists in its being committed against God; and that the sinner's guilt is to be measured by the opposition and enmity of his heart to the divine character and will.—Here then we shall discover St. Paul's sins to have been of crimson dye. Outwardly moral in his conduct, even zealous in his religious professions, he had been inwardly a bitter enemy to God and holiness. He had been full

* Philip. iii. vi.

of pride and unbelief, the two worst sins of which a man can be guilty. He had hated the Gospel, because it opposed his prejudices, and bade him lay aside his self-righteous hopes of justifying himself by his works. And because he had hated the Gospel, he had refused to attend to the proofs, which might have convinced him of its truth. He had obstinately shut his eyes that he might not see, and his ears that he might not hear: while he had conceived and cherished the most rancorous enmity against the holy Jesus and his faithful followers.—Now if the description of the apostle's guilt were to end here, we must allow that it was guilt of no common measure. But the description does not end here: much remains to be added. While such had been the sin *indulged* in the heart, it had not been *confined* to the heart. It had broken forth into outward acts; and those of the worst kind: into blasphemy and persecution. St. Paul tells us that he had been "a *blasphemer*."* "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." Perhaps, my brethren, we take not words into our account of sin. We may suppose that a hasty expression at least, whether impure, or profane, or passionate, will escape unnoticed, and brings no guilt upon the soul. But we may be assured, that such suppositions are not only without any foundation from scripture, but are directly contrary to scripture. "For every *idle* word," much more then for every *wicked* word, "shall men give account." And when all the wicked words, which a wicked man has spoken, shall be brought to light and publicly known, we may judge how immensely such a discovery will add to his guilt and his confusion. St. Paul felt how greatly he had sinned in this respect. How many blasphemous speeches he had uttered against the blessed Jesus, and the Gospel of his grace! How many false, malicious and blood-thirsty words he had spoken against the unoffending christians!—Nor had *words* been sufficient to express his rage against them. He had taken upon himself the dreadful office of a *persecutor*. He had "made havock of the church," entering into every house, and without regard to sex or age, throwing the christians into prison. Hear

* 1 Tim. i. 13.

his own account of the matter: "I persecuted this way unto the death:" "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft, in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."*—After this representation, in what light does the apostle's character and conduct before his conversion to christianity appear? Did he much overstate the truth, when he said "of sinners I am chief?" Do we not see the full meaning of his expression in the text, "*Howbeit* I obtained *mercy?*"—'Vile as I was, sunk far beneath the common level of ordinary sinners; an enemy to God; a proud blasphemer; an injurious and a bloody persecutor; I yet obtained mercy—There was mercy with God in Christ Jesus even for *me*. He, who came into the world to save sinners, could find mercy for such a one, as I am. Notwithstanding my aggravated guilt he did not shut me out from his compassion. Blessed be his name! where sin had abounded, grace did much more abound.'—Such was the free, the rich, the wonderful mercy, which St. Paul obtained.—I set before you.

II. The cause for which he obtained it.

Perhaps on hearing this account of the apostle, it might be proudly and presumptuously asked: 'Why did St. Paul obtain mercy? Why did God shew mercy to so great and obstinate an offender? Or, if the Lord designed, in due time to convert him to the faith, and to make him a preacher of the Gospel, why did he suffer him to run such lengths in sin, and not earlier prevent him by his grace?' In answer to such questions it might be sufficient to say: "Nay but O man, who art thou, that repliest against God?" or to recite these words of the Almighty, "I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."†—But we are enabled in this instance to go further. We are enabled to give a more direct answer to these enquiries. We *can* state the reason, *why* St. Paul obtained mercy; *why* he was permitted to go on so long in sin; *why* he was afterwards brought to the knowledge and faith of Christ. He says himself; "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in

* Acts xxii. 4.—xxvi. 10, 11. † Rom. ix. 20. Exodus xxxiii. 19.

me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."—The case of St. Paul was intended on purpose to shew forth the riches of divine grace to give a proof of the unfathomable love of Christ in pardoning the chief of sinners, and thus to afford an encouraging example to all sinners in every age, who should flee to Christ for refuge.

But let us more attentively examine the points here stated by the apostle.—"Jesus Christ shewed to him all long-suffering." Long-suffering towards sinners is one of the most glorious perfections of God. It comprehends that slowness to wrath, that unwillingness to punish, that forbearance under provocations, that patient waiting for repentance, that readiness to receive the returning sinner, which the Almighty claims as peculiarly belonging to himself, and which he so abundantly manifests in his dealings with men. But when were these divine qualities more clearly manifested, than in the instance of St. Paul? —"To him was shewn *all* long-suffering." This glorious perfection was exercised towards him in the greatest possible extent. God bore long with him, and though grievously insulted, yet suffered not his displeasure to arise. How provoking must have been the pride and unbelief of this chief of sinners, while cloaked under the mask of religion! How offensive must have been his prayers and offerings, while proceeding from a heart at enmity with God! How loudly did his blaspheming language and persecuting spirit call for vengeance on him! But the vengeance, so loudly called for, was still withheld. Nay, at length, when not content with driving the christians from Jerusalem, he pursued them to foreign cities; when "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he hastened to Damascus, that he might more speedily complete their ruin; not even then, was the divine patience exhausted towards him. At that very time, in that very place, the Lord met him with tokens of love and favour; subdued his stubborn heart; and reconciled him to himself. No sooner, under a conviction of his guilt and misery, did he call for mercy, but he obtained it. No sooner was it said of him, "Be-

hold he prayeth :" but Ananias in a vision, was directed to go and comfort him.

We here see, what is meant by *all long suffering.* Let us then remember, that in this instance it was shewn on purpose for a *pattern.* The long-suffering shewn to the apostle was intended to teach us in a manner more forcibly than words could teach us, that God is slow to anger and of tender mercy; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It was intended to impress upon us by *example,* that most important and comfortable truth, which the scriptures throughout declare that "in Christ all fulness dwells;"* fulness of mercy, grace, and goodness; that in him are riches unsearchable; pardon for sinners of every rank, description, and age; love, which passeth knowledge; compassion, which knows no bounds. God grant, that the truth thus taught us, may come with power and efficacy to every heart! May it speak peace and consolation to every wounded spirit!

Are there any among us whose souls are weighed down with a sense of unpardoned sin: who, awakened to a sight of their guilt and danger, are filled with distressing fears, with desponding thoughts; and are ready to conclude that there is no mercy for them? Be not cast down, as men without hope. Paul obtained mercy. Why may not you obtain it! Is there any thing in your case so different from that of the apostle, as justly to prevent your drawing comfort from his example?—Perhaps you say, 'I am a great and grievous sinner.' So was Paul.—'I have continued long in rebellion against God.' So did Paul.—'I have been very provoking in my sins.' So had Paul been.—'I have been guilty of slighting the Gospel, and of despising the long-suffering of God.' So had Paul been.—But still you say 'Paul had not been *such* a sinner as I have been: he had not been an immoral, an impure, or an intemperate sinner.'—True: but he had been a blaspheming a persecuting sinner. If he had not been the slave of lust, he had yet been the slave of pride, of spiritual pride. And have you any scriptural grounds for concluding, that the mercy of God, which was so abundantly shewn in the one instance, will be withholden in the other? Nay, does not the text assert the very con-

* Col. i. 19.

trary? Does it not directly affirm, that the Lord's merciful dealing with Paul, was a *pattern* of his merciful dealing with others: and that it was *designed* to be a *pattern* for the comfort, and encouragement of all them, who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting? Take then the comfort and encouragement thus provided, thus intended for you. "*Believe* on Christ to life everlasting." Flee to him for deliverance from the wrath to come. Rely on his promises of forgiveness. Plead nothing but his merits in your favour. Put your soul into his hands: and doubt not but that you shall find his mercy greater than your largest wishes.

But before I conclude this subject, let me endeavour to guard it from abuse. There is a sad propensity in man to wrest the scriptures to his own destruction, and to turn the sweet and wholesome food, which they provide, into the most deadly poison. Some of you may be tempted to make the pattern set before us in the text, an occasion of greater sin. You may perversely argue, that because the Lord was long-suffering to Paul, while he continued in his sins, he will therefore be long-suffering to you while you continue in your sins. 'Paul, you may say, obtained mercy, and so shall we. As he long remained a sinner and found forgiveness; so we, though we long remain sinners, shall find forgiveness too.' But beware, my brethren, how you indulge such an impious, such a dangerous thought.—Paul indeed obtained mercy: but he did not sin on the presumptuous hope that he *should* obtain it. In this respect your case and his would be utterly unlike. His sins were totally without excuse: but yet, in the very act of committing them, he had a zeal, however mistaken, for God; and verily *thought* with himself that he *ought* to do many things "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Can you say this of yourselves? While you are wilfully continuing in the commission of sin, can you from your hearts say, that you verily think you are doing what you *ought*? Should you attempt to utter such a falsehood, your very intention of hereafter repenting and obtaining mercy, would convict you.—If therefore you are resolved to go on in sin you must abide the consequences: but dare not to draw any argument in your favour from the case before us: for it affords you

none. The mercy which St. Paul obtained, gives no encouragement to a continuance in sin. Far otherwise: it calls you to repentance. The long-suffering of God should lead you to repentance. The thought, that God has borne so long with your offensive provocations; that he has held his hand, while you have dared him to hurl destruction on your head; that he has daily nourished, protected, blessed you, while you have daily abused his gifts and despised his mercies; that, notwithstanding your past rebellions, he is still ready to pardon all your sins and to take you into favour—this thought should break the heart of stone, and cause the waters of godly sorrow to flow down. God grant that it may be so! That each of you smiting on your breast, may say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

SERMON XXXII.

THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD WISER THAN THE CHRILDREN OF LIGHT.

For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.—*Luke* xvi. 8.

THESE words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ on the following occasion. He had been telling those who were present, of a certain steward, who for negligence and dishonesty had incurred his master's displeasure, and was about to be put out of his stewardship. The man had no sooner heard that he was to lose his place, than he began to think with himself how he should escape the distress and want, to which this calamity would expose him. He was too proud to beg, and either unable or unwilling to work. At last he resolved on the following expedient; by which he hoped to secure to himself a livelihood, when his present means of support should fail.

He called his master's debtors to him, and made such an alteration in their several accounts, as would give the appearance of their owing far less, than was the real amount of their debts. By this artful project, his master indeed would be greatly defrauded, but his own interest would be effectually served, for the debtors, being thus favoured by him, would not only be disposed to favour and assist him in return; but also, being made partners in his dishonesty, they would afterwards, from fear of detection, be unable to resist any demands, which he might make upon them. Such was his dishonest, but politic design. It was not however, so well concealed, but that it reached his master's ears; who when he heard of it, "commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely." He doubtless strongly disapproved, and severely condemned the *iniquity* of the proceeding; but at the same time, he could not but express an admiration of its *wisdom* and *policy*. And this was the occasion which gave rise to the observation in the text. The sagacity and cleverness of this unprincipled man, in providing against the evils which threatened him, called forth from our Lord this pointed remark, that "the children of this world, are in their generation wiser than the children of light." In discoursing on these words, I shall endeavour

I. To shew more distinctly the meaning of the remark contained in them.

II. To point out in some particular instances its truth and propriety.

I. In endeavouring to shew more distinctly the meaning of the remark in the text, I would first direct your notice to the persons, whom our Lord here mentions and compares together; "The children of this world, and the children of light." The expression, here used, is one very common in scripture. We read of "the children of disobedience," "the children of wrath," "the children of wisdom." Nor is there any difficulty in understanding these phrases. By "the children of disobedience" are clearly meant the disobedient; those who are living in disobedience to God's commandments. The "children of wrath" are such, as by sin, have incurred the wrath of God. The "children of wisdom" are those who value

and seek after true wisdom. In like manner then, by the "children of this world," we are to understand *worldly* persons; those, who make this world their God; who are devoted to the cares, the pleasures, or the pursuits of the present life; who mind earthly things, have their treasure here, and desire no better portion than this world can yield: while on the other hand, by "the children of light" are meant *religious* persons; those who having been "sometimes darkness are now light in the Lord:" whose understandings have been enlightened to see the truth as it is in Jesus; who, no longer walking after the course of this world, profess to be seeking a better country, that is a heavenly one.——Such are the persons of whom our Lord here speaks, and concerning whom he remarks, that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Now it is clear, that this remark cannot be understood in a full and an unqualified sense. Our Lord can never be supposed absolutely to say that worldly, irreligious persons are wiser than religious people: for to say this would be to contradict the whole tenor of his own discourses, and the universal testimony of scripture. In the word of God, religion is constantly represented as wisdom, and irreligion as folly. It can therefore be only in respect to some particular point, and not in a general view, that our Lord makes this remark in the text. In the same manner as when the master is said to have commended the unjust steward; he did not mean to convey a general commendation of his conduct; but only intended, in a particular instance, to notice his ingenuity and foresight.—The highest *exercise* and clearest *mark* of true wisdom, is the choice of a right *end*; the fixing on such an object of pursuit as is deserving of our preference, and will repay our trouble. Now in this respect no comparison between the wisdom of worldly and of religious persons can for a moment be maintained. The *end*, which worldly men choose, sufficiently marks their folly. The object, which they fix on, in some shape or other, is worldly happiness. This they propose to themselves as the chief good, and follow it with all their might. But it is an object, which will never repay their trouble, and therefore is not deserving their preference. On the other hand, the *end* which religious

people have in view, bears the broadest stamp of wisdom. This object is one every way deserving their choice and labour; for it is a treasure in *heaven*, an enduring substance, the salvation of their souls, an eternal life with God in glory. Here then, so far as the object in pursuit is concerned, the children of light most decidedly surpass in wisdom the children of this world.

Another mark of wisdom is to follow an end when chosen, by the most suitable *means*. Having once fixed on an object, a man's wisdom will appear in the steps which he takes for attaining it. He who follows it in a way the most likely to gain his end, will in this respect, shew himself the wiser person. Such was the wisdom of the unjust steward. As to the object, which he had in view, namely to support himself in idleness by defrauding his master, he was most unwise; for dishonesty is always the worst policy. But at the same time, in the *means*, to which he had recourse, for gaining his purpose, he shewed his wisdom; wisdom indeed of a very bad quality and not really deserving of the name, but still, such as discovered a large share of shrewdness and ability. He took a way the most likely to succeed: and so far in this respect, he "did wisely."—And so far then, in this respect, "the children of this world are wiser than the children of light." In the choice and use of means, in the way of following their object, worldly people shew more wisdom than religious people. They are wiser "*in their generation*," they act more considerately, and consult better for their worldly and temporal interests, than religious persons do for their spiritual and eternal concerns. And here we distinctly see the meaning of the remark in the text. I shall now proceed.

II. To point out in some particular instances the truth and propriety of this remark. That worldly people consult better for their temporal interests, than religious persons for their spiritual concerns, will be plain from considering in the first place, the *degree* of *diligence* and *activity*, which they severally exert. The worldly man, be his object what it may, is unwearied in following it. Whether he aim at the enlargement of his trade, the advancement of his family, the improvement of his estate, the acquisition of a great name, or the enjoyment of

pleasure, still his mind is always alive in pursuit of its favourite object. It is ever uppermost in his thoughts. He is constantly on the watch for some favourable opportunity of promoting its attainment; and eagerly avails himself of every opportunity which offers itself. Not a day, not an hour passes, but some plan is formed, some steps are taken, for furthering the accomplishment of his wishes. Nothing which may be done to-day, is put off till to-morrow. Nothing which he has the means of doing, is left undone. He rises early, he late takes rest; he eats the bread of carefulness; while increasing obstacles and discouraging appearances only quicken his endeavours, and call forth greater exertions. Such are the activity and diligence, which worldly men exert in their worldly callings. Are religious persons equally active and diligent in their spiritual concerns? Truth compels us to say that they are not. They have a great work on their hands; but they are oftentimes sadly indolent in performing it. They have many enemies to overcome, many temptations to resist, many lusts to subdue, many duties to fulfil; but alas! they are apt to give way to sloth, and to be careless and negligent, where they ought to be active and alert. They suffer many opportunities of doing good to slip away unimproved. They defer till to-morrow, what ought to be done to-day. They let their good resolutions be overcome for want of a more steady exertion. They do not strive as they ought to do. They do not derive from the divine ordinances so much good as they might. Even in the house of prayer, their "soul still cleaveth unto the dust." Their attention is often distracted, their hearts are cold, their devotions are languid. Instead of pressing forward towards perfection, they are too apt to be satisfied with present attainments. Instead of going forth in the strength of the Lord, and fighting boldly the good fight of faith, they are too prone to be discouraged at seeming difficulties, to give way to unreasonable fears, and to stop in the path of duty, saying, "There is a lion in the way." Thus in respect to diligence and activity in following the object of their pursuit, the children of this world far surpass the children of light.

The same may be said, in the next place, as to the *de-*

gree of *foresight* and *circumspection*, which they severally exercise. As worldly men are very quick-sighted in discovering their interests, so they are very long-sighted in discerning it afar off. They look forward to effects and consequences as connected with their worldly projects. They forecast in their minds whether such or such distant events will hinder or promote their favourite object. They provide against evils, which they foresee are coming. They are seldom taken by surprise. They guard against disappointments. They profit by past experience.—But how different in this respect, is oftentimes the conduct of religious persons as to their spiritual concerns! How little circumspection and foresight do they, comparatively, exercise! Though repeatedly admonished of approaching dangers, they suffer themselves at last to be taken by surprise. Though repeatedly overcome by such or such a temptation, yet they do not watch and strengthen themselves as they might do, against future attacks from the same quarter. Though they cannot but know, by past experience, that some particular circumstances, employments or companies prove highly injurious to their spiritual interests, yet they are frequently very remiss in their endeavours to avoid this danger; or if it cannot be avoided, in preparing to meet it. Many a time are they thus constrained to lament their miscarriages, which a little precaution and vigilance might have prevented; and to take shame to themselves for the want of that circumspection and foresight, in which they see their worldly neighbours so far superior.

Take another instance of the truth and propriety of the remark in the text. The children of this world exceed the children of light, not only in activity, and diligence, not only in foresight and circumspection, but also in *that decision and singleness of mind* with which they pursue their favourite end. Worldly men follow their worldly interests, with a determination, which makes every thing else either give way to it, or help to the attainment of it. Whatever may be the object of their pursuit, whether it be money, or pleasure, or honour, they suffer nothing to interfere with it or to draw off their attention from it. Every thing else is sacrificed to the acquisition of it. All their efforts are directed toward this one single point.

Now it is plain, that this way of following an object, must be attended with great advantages. For the mind, being neither distracted by a variety of pursuits, nor turned aside by other considerations from its main point, applies and directs its whole undivided force and ingenuity to the attainment of its end; and when thus applied and directed, how probable is it, that such efforts will succeed!—But far different is the case with religious persons. *They* shew not this decision and singleness of mind in their spiritual concerns. Though it be their main object to please God, and to save their souls, yet they do not make every thing else give way to this as they ought to do. It is true indeed, that they do not actually attempt to serve God and mammon; but yet it is also true, that the love of the world is not so utterly brought into subjection, but that they too often suffer themselves to be diverted from their chief purpose, by worldly cares or pleasures. It is true indeed that they do not wilfully obey sin, in any of the lusts thereof; but it is also true that sin is not so entirely subdued in their hearts, but that they are too often drawn aside and hindered in their spiritual course by its remaining power in their souls. Thus, though they do not follow religion with a divided mind, yet they too often pursue it with a distracted one. They too often suffer lower objects immoderately to engage their attention, and to take it off from their grand concern. Hence it comes to pass, that they do not make so decided a progress in the ways of God as they might; and thus it appears, that they do not consult for their spiritual concerns, so well as the children of this world do for their temporal interests.

Having thus explained the meaning of the remark in the text, and also shown in some particular instances its truth and propriety, I would now shortly apply the subject, by addressing myself

1. To those among us who are really seeking God, and are intending and endeavouring to lead a holy and religious life. To such among us, the subject is both humbling and instructive. It is humbling, by shewing us how far we fall short of doing what we ought to do. It is instructive by shewing us how we may do better for the time to come. We have seen in what respects the

children of this world are wiser than the children of light. But surely, this ought not to be. Consider the difference of the objects, which worldly and religious persons are following. Worldly persons are following an object in itself fleeting, perishing, and comparatively worthless; an object, which may never be attained; and which if attained will certainly disappoint their expectation, and must soon be taken from them for ever. But religious persons are following an object in itself substantial, lasting, and of infinite value; an object, which they are sure of attaining; and which, when attained will far exceed all their hopes, and will never be taken away. With such disproportion in the objects pursued, *ought* the children of this world to be wiser in their way of conducting the pursuit than the children of light? *Ought* they, who are seeking merely a worldly treasure, to shew more diligence and activity, more foresight and circumspection, more decision and singleness of mind in attaining their end, than they, who are seeking a heavenly treasure? Are we not ashamed to think, that we who profess to be striving for an incorruptible crown, a crown of righteousness and glory, should be less active, less earnest, less anxious in our endeavours to obtain it, than worldly men are to obtain the corruptible things of this life? Let us awake from this disgraceful sleep. Let us act in a manner more becoming our pretensions. Let us do more credit to the religion which we profess. Let us be instructed even by worldly men. Though we cannot approve of their judgment or account them wise in respect to the *object*, which they pursue; nay, though in this respect, we must decidly condemn their choice and loudly proclaim their folly; yet let us so far benefit by their example, as to copy their diligence, circumspection, and zeal; and thus learn to exercise in a better cause, and to nobler purposes, that wisdom, which they display in their inferior concerns. Let us remember, that it is not enough to seek; we must strive; we must labour to grow in grace and improve our talents: for according to our spiritual growth and improvement, will be our degree of happiness and glory hereafter.—I must say a few words.

2. To those worldly persons of whom we have been speaking. My brethren, I have been shewing you what

is that wisdom, for which our Lord commends you in the text. Think not, however, that because he commends your wisdom, he therefore approves your conduct. Far otherwise. The master commended the unjust steward for his wisdom, but he did not, and could not commend him for his dishonesty. And in what respects do you differ from this steward? So long as you are setting your affections on earthly things, and seeking your happiness in the world instead of in God, you are defrauding him. You are robbing him of that honour, and glory, and service, which are due to him alone. And can he approve what you are doing? Be assured, however, he may so far commend your foresight, ingenuity, and diligence, as to hold them up to his own people for their imitation and benefit, he yet entirely disapproves and severely condemns your conduct. Glory not then in your worldly wisdom: for it is a wisdom, which will not only profit you nothing, but which in the end, will ruin your soul. Renounce this wisdom and become really wise, wise unto salvation. Seek the wisdom which is from above. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." The prudence, activity, and watchfulness, which you are consuming on the unprofitable pursuits of this world, if rightly directed and employed, will procure for you an incorruptible inheritance. God give you grace thus to direct and employ them for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ!

SERMON XXXIII.

TENDENCY OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES TO PRODUCE TRUE CONTENTMENT.

I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.—*Philip.* iv. 11. 12.

THERE have been few persons who have been put to heavier trials of patience and temper than St Paul. He had endured many and great hardships; "in journeyings

often; in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often; in hunger and thirst, in fastings often; in cold and nakedness."* At the very time of his writing this epistle to the Philippians, he was a prisoner at Rome for Christ's sake. Yet this is the man, whom we find declaring in the text, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Now on comparing this declaration of the apostle, with the account of his trials and sufferings, shall we think that he naturally differed from other men; that he was not subject to the same feelings, infirmities, and sinful tempers, with the rest of his fellow-creatures? His own words to the people of Lystra, will not allow us to think thus: for he tells them, that he was "a man of like passions with them:"† and so far from this contented disposition being *natural* to him, he expressly says in the text, that he had *acquired* it. "I have *learned* in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content: every where and in all things I am *instructed* both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." But *where* had he learned this lesson? *Where* had he been instructed in these things? At the feet of his master, Gamaliel? In the schools of the Pharisees; of the Jewish doctors, or of the heathen philosophers? These teachers might have commended the virtue of contentment: they might have shewn how reasonable it was in itself, and how necessary to the happiness of man: but to teach this lesson with effect; to put their followers in possession of this virtue, was not in their power. St. Paul had not learned it of them. It was at the feet of Jesus, in the school of christian philosophy, that he had been taught this lesson. It was since he had learned "to count all things loss *for Christ*, and *for his sake* to suffer the loss of all things," that he had known "both how to be abased, and how to abound." It was in the school of godly discipline, and christian ex-

* 2 Cor. xi. 26, 27. † Acts xiv. 15.

perience, that he had acquired this knowledge. And in this school, the same knowledge may always be acquired. The heavenly doctrines of the Gospel all tend to produce it. Christian principles, when received into the heart, and suffered to bring forth their natural fruit, necessarily lead to true contentment; and the more decidedly the disciple of Christ, lives under the influence of his divine religion, the nearer will he come to the happy experience of the apostle stated in the text. This is a truth, which I shall endeavour to explain and enforce; and with this view, I shall shew two things.

I. That christianity takes away the natural causes of discontent.

II. That it furnishes very powerful motives for exercise of a contented mind.

I. One cause of discontent is pride. Men are naturally proud. They have high thoughts of their own merits and pretensions. They think that nothing is too good for them: that they have a claim to every comfort and enjoyment; and that if any thing desirable be withheld from them, they are treated with injustice, and not according to their deservings. Hence, necessarily springs a discontented spirit. Puffed up with such high thoughts of themselves, they are never contented with what they have. Their arrogant pretensions are never satisfied. Enough, in their opinion, is never done for them. That *they* should want such a convenience, or be denied such a request, or be forced to submit to such a hardship, wounds their pride, and renders them dissatisfied. 'Is it becoming,' (they say to themselves) 'that we should be treated thus? Why should we be used in a manner so unworthy of us? Why are not our claims regarded? Why are not we dealt with more suitably to our deserts?'

Now Christianity effectually removes this cause of discontent. It takes away our pride. Humility is the first lesson which a man learns in the school of Christ: and when once this grace is attained, a great step is made towards contentedness of mind. The true christian, (and it is of such a christian only that I speak,) has been deeply humbled. He has been convinced that he is a sinner; and with that conviction, all his high thoughts of himself have been overthrown. He has seen himself before God,

stript of every plea, and deserving only of wrath and punishment. What then is become of his arrogant pretensions, his meritorious claims? He now sees that as a sinner he has justly forfeited his claim to every blessing: that far from having been treated *worse* than he deserves, he has been treated far better. Let his comforts be ever so few, he feels that they are more than he has any right to expect. Let his sufferings be ever so great, he is conscious that they are less than his iniquities have deserved. What ground then is left for discontent? What cause remains for repining and complaint? 'None, none, (he cries,) I am not dealt with according to my demerits. Though I be crossed in my wishes; though I suffer some inconveniences; though I endure some hardships; yet I am a sinner. I deserve all this, and worse. Far then, from being dissatisfied, I have great reason to be thankful, that so many mercies are yet continued to me.'

Another cause of discontent is self-preference; an undue and immoderate love of ourselves. This disposition also is common to us. We naturally love ourselves with an excessive fondness; and this partiality as naturally leads to discontent. Under the influence of this extravagant passion, we look upon our own concerns as those of the greatest moment; in comparison of which, all others are of no value. Our own interests are to be served; our own happiness is to be consulted; our own wishes are to be gratified. Self is ever uppermost in our minds. But, so long as this is the case, how impossible it is that we should not be discontented? For while we see others possessing advantages, which we possess not; or free from troubles, which we experience; how naturally do we conceive envy in our hearts; and comparing our lot with theirs, grow impatient and dissatisfied. 'See,' (we are ready to exclaim,) 'how happy others are! They have none of the sorrows which we have. They have a thousand comforts which we have not. How hard is our lot! Why is it not like theirs? Why should they have more enjoyments, and fewer sufferings than we have? If all persons were as much oppressed and troubled as we are, our lot would more easily be borne. But to see others in a situation so much better than ourselves is provoking and intolerable.'

But for this evil also christianity brings a cure. It takes away this cause of discontent. It regulates our self-love. It checks our immoderate attention to our own ease, comfort, and enjoyment. It teaches us "not to look every one at our own things *only*, but at the things of others" also: to consult their interests and their happiness, at least equally with our own. Christianity teaches us, in imitation of our divine Master, not to please ourselves, but to please our neighbours; to love them, as we love ourselves; for their sake to deny ourselves, and submit to inconveniences: to have a fellow-feeling in what befalls them; to rejoice when they rejoice, and to be as glad at their prosperity and success as at our own. This is the heavenly temper of love, which christianity enjoins; and which it inspires and maintains in those who truly believe: and where this temper prevails, how great a cause of discontent is taken away! Those, who love their neighbour as themselves, cannot repine at his lot being better than their own. Those, who in fact rejoice at his prosperity, cannot be troubled at it. Where such christian love prevails, this ground of discontent cannot remain.

A third cause of discontent is covetousness. Men are naturally covetous. They have naturally a strong desire after the things of this world; and a desire which never is satisfied. The more they have the more they crave. Let them have ever so much, still something else is wanted: and so long as this is the case, they are dissatisfied. Ahab amidst all his treasures and palaces, was discontented, because Naboth's vineyard was denied him. And how often does it happen, that a man takes no enjoyment in the many possessions which he has, because he is not able to procure this house, or that piece of land, or some other object, for which he inordinately longs.—But here also, christianity brings a cure. It teaches us, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* It reveals to us far more valuable riches, than this world can give. It draws off our affections from earthly things, and leads us to fix them on things above: and in thus taking away our immoderate love of the world, it takes away a great cause of discontent. Why should the christian be dissatisfied, that he has so little of this

* Luke xii. 15.

world, when this world is not his treasure? 'My treasure, (he cries,) is in heaven. *There* I look for an enduring substance. Whether my portion here be great or small, is a matter of little consequence. This estate indeed might suit my convenience. That house might add to my comfort. But I covet them not. My happiness does not depend on these things. I am not unhappy because I cannot procure them. I have better things in store. I have an inheritance reserved for me, incorruptible and undefiled: "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'" Where such is the language of the heart, such its moderation with respect to worldly things, what room is left for discontent?

But while christianity thus takes away the natural causes of discontent,

II. It also furnishes very powerful motives for the exercise of a contented mind.

In the first place, the disciples of Christ are under the strongest obligations, to walk in the footsteps of their divine Master. It is their profession to follow the example of their Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him. They are taught to look forward to their perfect renewal to his image, as the completion of their happiness in heaven: and though on earth, they must ever fall far short of a perfect likeness to him; yet even here, it is their duty, their privilege, and their desire, to have that mind which was in Christ Jesus, and to shew forth in their lives, a faint resemblance at least, of those heavenly dispositions which shone so bright in him. Among these, contentedness of mind was very conspicuous. No person could have greater provocations to discontent than the blessed Jesus had. His whole life was a continued succession of labour, fatigue, and mortification. He was so poor, that, as he tells us himself, "He had not where to lay his head." He was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."* He was falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and treated with such indignity as to see even a robber and a murderer preferred before him. Yet where do we find in his conduct, or in his words, any expression or sentiment of discontent? He bore all his sufferings with meekness, and

* Matt. viii. 20 Isaiah liii. 3.

patience. He manifested at all times, an entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father. "When he was reviled he reviled not again." In the most trying scene of his sufferings, he betrayed nothing of a murmuring, repining spirit. Here then, his true disciples see a perfect pattern of what they themselves ought to be: and hence also, are they stirred up to imitate it. Can they be the followers of Jesus Christ, and yet allow themselves to be discontented? Did he endure so much for them, and endure it all with so much patience; and shall they murmur at their comparatively light afflictions? Shall they repine at being poor or despised, or unjustly treated, when he suffered poverty, contempt, and injustice, for their sakes? No: they have not so been taught the truth, as it is in Jesus. They will take his yoke and learn of him. They will bear their cross and follow him.

Besides, in the second place, true christians are firmly convinced, that their lot, whatever it may be, is the *lot* chosen for them, by their blessed Lord and Master. They know that the hairs of their head are all numbered; that nothing happens to them by chance; that every thing which befalls them, is ordered and appointed by that Saviour, who once bled on the cross, but now hath all power in heaven and in earth. Christ is their King and Master: as such they are bound to obey and serve him; to do his will, and to submit to his government. This is what they are required to do; yea, what they wish to do, and have pleasure in doing. Can they be discontented with their lot? Can they be dissatisfied with what their King and Master orders for them? Far otherwise are their thoughts. What, they say to themselves, is this. 'Though our lot be not so easy as that of many others; though we may be exposed to many hardships, and deprived of many comforts; yet still our lot is that which Jesus Christ has chosen for us. He sends us indeed, some difficulties. He withholds from us some enjoyments. But has he not a right to do what he will with his own? Shall our eye be evil, because he is good? He has a right to dispose of us as he sees fit; for he has bought us with a price, even with his own blood. He has a right to give and take away, according to his will: and his will shall be ours. What he gives, we will thankfully receive. What

he takes away, we will readily part with. What he denies we will not desire to have. What he lays on us, we will patiently bear. Submission, *cheerful* submission to his will, is our duty and our happiness. Thus " every where, and in all things we are instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

But further, while true christians know that their lot, be it what it may, is chosen for them by Jesus Christ, they also know, that it is *chosen* for them, in *infinite love and mercy to their souls*. He knows what is best for his people, and will order every thing for their spiritual and everlasting good. He hath, to this end, vouchsafed to them a most gracious promise, that " all things shall work together for their good." Thus they feel convinced, that in whatsoever state they are, it is the one, which is really best for them. What a powerful motive is thus furnished, for the exercise of a contented mind! With such a conviction, how can the real christian be otherwise than contented, whatever may befall him? 'What ground, (he asks,) have I for being dissatisfied? My desire and aim is, so to pass through things temporal, that I finally lose not the things eternal. Now what state, or what circumstances, may in this view, be best for me, I know not: but Christ my Saviour knows, and will lead me into them. Does he disappoint my worldly hopes? He sees that disappointment will be good for me. Does he call me to trials? He sees that trials are necessary for me. Does he take away my worldly comforts? He sees that they would prove hurtful to me. Does he make my way rough, difficult and thorny? He sees that it is the way, in which it is safest for me to walk. Far then from being discontented and repining, I have reason to be thankful and to rejoice. I have reason to cry out with the apostle, " in whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content;" for I know it to be that state, in which my best interests will be most effectually promoted and secured.'

The practical uses which I shall make of the truth thus explained and enforced, are two.

1. I shall employ it for correcting an error which is prevalent in the world. Persons, who know nothing of the power of religion themselves, are apt to form strange and mistaken notions respecting it. They regard and

represent it, as making men dull and melancholy; as destroying cheerfulness, spoiling present enjoyment, and casting over the mind nothing but gloom and darkness. But I would seriously ask such persons, on what reasonable grounds they can build or support these charges? I would seriously ask them, whether the truth, which we have been considering, does not give a very opposite view of the subject? With what justice can it be said of religion, that it makes men dull and melancholy, destroys cheerfulness, spoils enjoyment, and casts gloom and darkness over the mind; when we see that its natural tendency is to do the very reverse; to provide a remedy for the most tormenting evils of the human heart, and to spread over the soul, peace, serenity, and happiness? Look at the proud, the selfish, or the covetous man, and see what a miserable being he is. Tossed by tumultuous passions, he is "like the troubled sea, which cannot rest." Never pleased, never satisfied, never contented, what can he know of inward peace? Compare the disturbed and agitated state of his mind, with the calm and tranquil feelings expressed by the apostle in the text, and judge whether religion really makes men unhappy. If you allow, as all must do, that a "contented mind is a continual feast," surely you must also allow, that the same thing, which in the highest degree promotes and increases true contentment, cannot be destructive to happiness. Cease then to make assertions, in support of which you cannot offer any solid argument; assertions, which facts and experience daily contradict. Cease to expose the ignorance; cease to betray the malignity of the carnal mind, by ascribing to religion, effects which it never did, which it never can produce; and which your own conscience, if fairly consulted, will tell you that it never does produce. Rather seek yourselves to become *really* religious; so shall you know, by your own experience, the falsehood and injustice of your charges. Instead of speaking evil of religion, make trial of her ways, and you shall find them, "ways of pleasantness and peace."

2. I would take occasion from the truth before us to stir up real Christians to a more faithful and diligent improvement of their privileges. It sometimes happens, that persons who own and feel the power of religion, and on

the whole, live under its influence, yet are far from shewing the same mind and temper with St. Paul in the text. When disappointed or afflicted they betray a repining and an impatient spirit; and prove occasionally at least, that they have not as yet learned in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content. Now whence does this arise? It is not that religion is unable to do for them what it did for the apostle. It is not that religion cannot, everywhere and in all things instruct them, as it instructed him, both to be full and to be hungry, " both to abound and to suffer need." But the fact is, they do not give themselves up to religion so decidedly as St. Paul did. They do not suffer religion to produce in them all those effects which it produced in the apostle; and which if permitted, it would produce in them. Sin is not mortified to so great an extent as it might be. Pride, self-perference, and covetousness are not broken and weakened as they should be. Christian principles are not kept in so lively exercise as they ought to be. Hence it comes to pass that at times, the flesh gets the better of the spirit, and a discontented temper prevails. But, my brethren, this ought not to be. Let me earnestly exhort such of you as answer this description, to know your privileges better, and to turn them to a better account. Let religion have a more decided influence on your heart. Call forth your principles into more lively exercise. Lay the axe to the root of all your evil and selfish inclinations. By failing to do this so resolutely, and effectually as you might, you are depriving yourselves of much solid peace and comfort; and are keeping back from religion, much of that credit and honour, which she expects at your hands, and which it is your duty to reflect on her. Awake then from this injurious and disgraceful slumber. Trim your lamps. Study more deeply in the school of Christ; and in your lives shew forth more clearly, the praises of him, " who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

SERMON XXXIV.

JESUS ENDURING THE CROSS AND DESPISING THE SHAME.

Who for the joy, that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.—*Hebrews* xii. 2.

IF we should see a person undergoing very severe trials and bearing the most unprovoked indignities with fortitude, meekness, and constancy; we should be filled with high admiration of his character. But if we should discover that we ourselves had a *personal concern* in his sufferings; that he was undergoing them on *our* account, from the most generous motive, in order to save us from some heavy calamity, or to procure for us some unexpected good; our admiration would be heightened into gratitude; not without some mixture of regret and self-reproach, that we were the occasion of so much suffering.—Such are the feelings, though in the highest possible degree, which the sight of Christ crucified, ought to excite in us. We should regard it with the most admiring gratitude, and the deepest self-condemnation. God grant! that these feelings may be stirred up and strengthened in us, while I discourse to you on the passage in the text: "Who for the joy, that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." I need not tell you that it is Jesus Christ, of whom the apostle speaks. All, who hear the words, will readily apply them to him. Therefore without further preface I shall lead you to consider three things, as they are set before us in the text.

I. *What* Jesus Christ suffered.

II. *How* he suffered.

III. *Why* he suffered thus.

I. We read in the text, that Jesus Christ suffered the *cross* and the *shame*. Our Saviour's life, from the stable to the grave, was a life of suffering. But that which completed and filled up the whole was the cross. It was the

last, but bitterest part of that cup, which he undertook to drink. It was the lowest, deepest point of degradation, to which he was abased. Hence in that description of his wonderful humiliation in the second chapter of the Philippians, it is said, that "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*." That *he*, who was "in the form of God," having taken on him "the form of a servant," should so humble himself as to become obedient unto death, was truly wonderful; but, that this death should be *even the death of the cross*, was astonishing indeed. There is great force in the expression, "*even* the death of the cross:" which shews that there were some circumstances in that death; which were peculiar to itself, and which made it beyond every other death, dreadful and degrading. Let us see what these circumstances were.

In the first place it was the most *painful* of deaths. It subjected the sufferer to excessive pain and torture. This was so well known that the Romans derived from this very punishment, the word, which in their language, expressed the greatest degree of pain: and we, borrowing the word from them, call such a pain an *excruciating* pain; that is, a pain like that which was felt on the cross. Nor have we any word in our language, more descriptive of violent agony, than this. Nay, so dreadful was the pain of dying on the cross, that it was accounted a peculiar act of mercy in the judge to permit the criminal to be killed, before his body should be crucified. Indeed the very nature of the punishment, shews how excessive must have been the pain attending it. That the hands and feet, which being full of nerves, are some of the most feeling parts of the human body, should be pierced through, and fastened to the wood with iron spikes: that then, by the sudden raising up of the cross, and the fixing of the foot of it in the earth, the whole weight of the body should be thrown upon these torn and tender parts; how dreadful must have been the sufferings! How exquisite the torture! Add to which, the death of the cross was a slow, a tedious, a lingering death. The pain, great as it was, did not quickly put an end to the life; and so by its own violence deliver the

sufferer from misery. It destroyed him by degrees. It tortured, without immediately killing him. No vital part was touched. The crucified person was left to live under all this torment, till through anguish, loss of blood, fatigue and famine, his natural strength was quite worn out, and his heart ceased to beat. You may remember that when Jesus had hung for six hours on the cross, Pilate *marvelled* that he were dead already: and the two thieves, who were crucified with him, were both yet alive, when the soldiers came to take down their bodies from the cross in the evening of the day on which they had been executed. On the whole, we cannot well conceive a death more painful than the death of the cross; or one, which the most ingenious cruelty could have invented more suited to its purpose.

In the second place, it was the most *shameful* of deaths. Any death by the hand of the public executioner is shameful. It is always intended to bring disgrace on those who suffer it. But we can hardly have any just conception of the degree of infamy, which was attached to the death of the cross. We must indeed be sensible that the very circumstance of being publicly hung up as a criminal, exposed to the eye of every beholder, and having the crime, for which this punishment was supposed to be inflicted, written in large letters on the top of the cross, was in itself very ignominious. But it was the general opinion, in which this punishment was held, that stamped on it the deepest ignominy. It was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment; one however, which was deemed too infamous for any Roman citizen, ever to suffer. It was inflicted only on the lowest and vilest of mankind; on slaves, and notorious criminals; on such, as were accounted the pests and outcasts of society, a disgrace to human nature, and unworthy to be treated like human beings. These were the persons, for whom by the Roman law, this punishment was reserved. And hence we may judge, in what light it was generally regarded, and how great was the infamy attached to it. As a fact also, which further proves and clears this point, it may be added, that it was not uncommon to take even the dead bodies of criminals, who had not fallen alive into the hands of public justice, and to hang these upon the cross, as the way of expressing the

greatest detestation and contempt of their character, and of branding their memory with disgrace and ignominy. And it was for this reason; for the shame and infamy which this death brought with it, as much as for the pain and torture which it inflicted, that the Jews were so clamorous for Jesus to be crucified. They not only designed, by putting him to this slow and painful death, to gratify their malice and cruelty: but they intended also by the infliction of this punishment, to sink and degrade him to the very lowest depth of debasement; to rank him with the worst and vilest of mankind; to set him forth to the nation, and to the world, as an object of universal detestation and scorn; and to make his very name infamous and accursed.

Such were the general circumstances, which distinguished the death of the cross from every other death, and made it beyond all others dreadful and degrading. But in addition to these, there were in the case of Jesus some particular circumstances, which increased and aggravated both the usual pain and shame of crucifixion. As if the pain of the cross were not of itself sufficient to glut the vengeance of his enemies, they beat and buffetted him, and tore his back with scourges, before they led him to be crucified. They made a crown of thorns and fixed it on his head, by driving the points into his bleeding temples. They next forced him, though exhausted by these cruelties, to carry to the place of execution, one end at least of the heavy cross, to which he was to be nailed: and when arrived at the fatal spot, instead of giving to him, as was frequently the case with others, a cordial draught, which might support the spirits, or deaden the sense of feeling, they offered to him vinegar mingled with gall; which was so offensive, that even fainting and parched with thirst, as he must have been, he refused to drink it.

Again, as if the common shame and ignominy of crucifixion were not sufficient to express the infamy, with which his enemies wished to load him; they preferred before him Barabbas a notorious robber, who for sedition and murder had been cast into prison; demanding that he might be released, and Jesus crucified. Then to shew more pointedly, the light, in which they wished to repre-

sent him, they executed him in company with two malefactors; placing him in the midst, as being in their judgment the worst and vilest of the three. Next, in derision they placed this writing over his head; "Jesus the king of the Jews;" by which they meant in the most insulting manner, to scoff at his pretensions to that title. Here then, we might have supposed, that malice would have ceased its efforts: that if pity had not touched the breast at the sight of so much misery, yet, that invention itself would have been worn out. But no: further ignominy still awaited the wretched sufferer. While hanging in this dreadful torment, he was yet to encounter farther indignities; to listen to every reproachful taunt, which scorn and passion could cast forth upon him. The soldiers, who had nailed him to the cross, mocked him, laughed at his sufferings and derided his cries. The people who passed by, railed on him wagging their heads and saying, "Ah! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross." One, at least, of the thieves who were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Nay, the scribes and elders, the rulers and the priests, even the chief priests themselves, were so forgetful of what became their rank and character; as to take a part in this inhuman scene, and to join in reviling Jesus, and in putting him to shame. "He saved others, himself he cannot save. Let Christ the king of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

Such was the death, which Jesus died. Such were the cross and the shame, which he suffered. But *how* did he suffer them? This was the second thing to be considered.

II. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." This expression of *enduring* the cross, means something more than merely bearing it, and undergoing the pain. It is descriptive of the *manner* in which he bore it. It implies that he bore it with fortitude, with meekness, with patience. He *endured* it. He neither shrunk from it nor sunk under it. He met it with boldness. He went through it with constancy. The whole account of his sufferings justify us in putting this meaning on the word *endure*. Though he knew clearly beforehand, the bloody

baptism which awaited him; he yet described himself as "*straitened*, till it were accomplished." When the time drew near, far from seeking to avoid the cross, he "*stedfastly* set his face to go up to Jerusalem,"* When the hour was come, though he could have had twelve legions of angels to assist him, yet he made no resistance, but yielded himself up into the hands of his enemies. Throughout the trying scene which followed, he shewed no fear, no impatience, no unwillingness to finish what he had begun. "He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair. He hid not his face from shame and spitting." "Brought as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth."† He made no complaint: uttered no lamentation. When he was reviled he reviled not again. All was composure, dignity, self-possession and greatness of mind. He felt for others, but he felt not for himself. "Daughters of Jerusalem," (said he to the women, who followed him to Calvary) "weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children!" "Father!" (he exclaimed in behalf of the soldiers who were nailing him to the cross) "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Nay while he was hanging in all the agony of crucifixion, he yet affectionately remembered and noticed his afflicted mother, and recommended her to the care of his beloved disciple.‡ In this manner he *endured* the cross.

He also "*despised* the shame." Shame and infamy are evils, which it is often found more difficult to bear, than even pain and torture. Many persons who would endure great bodily suffering without shrinking, dread the very thought of disgrace and ignominy. Their bodies may sustain the former, but their minds cannot support the latter. Here their strength is tried, and fails. Here their weakness is discovered. They sink under this weight. Not so it was with Jesus. He *despised* the shame. All the indignities which his enemies endeavoured to heap on him, could not alter his purpose, nor shake his firmness. In his patience he possessed his soul. He was unmoved by all the scorn, contempt and ridicule, which was expressed against him; by all the falsehoods, calumnies.

* Luke xii. 50.—ix. 51. † Isaiah l. 6.—liii. 7.
‡ Luke xxiii. 28—34. John xix. 26, 27.

and reproaches, which were cast upon him. *He looked down upon them*, as the word properly signifies. He regarded them as beneath his notice; as things which did not deserve a thought, in comparison with the great object which he had in view.

What this object was, I now proceed to shew. It is the third thing which the text leads us to consider.

III. *Why* Jesus Christ suffered thus.

It must be plain, when Jesus thus "endured the cross, despising the shame," that he had some object in view; that there was some end, which he hoped to attain by his sufferings: some reward, which he proposed to himself, as a full compensation for all this pain and shame. So speaks the text. It tells us that it was for the joy, which was set before him. And what was this joy? The question may be readily answered. It was the joy of saving sinners: the joy of delivering innumerable souls, from the bondage of sin and Satan, and of bringing them to everlasting happiness. He saw the miserable state into which sin had plunged the race of Adam, and was touched with pity for them. He saw that they had no power of delivering themselves, out of their lost condition; that they could do nothing to atone for their guilt, and to make their peace with God: and that if left to themselves they must for ever suffer the dreadful punishments which their sins deserved. He saw these things; but at the same time he knew, that what they could not do for themselves, he could do for them. He knew that by his sufferings and obedience unto death, the death of the cross, he could make a full and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. He knew that the Father would graciously accept this sacrifice, and for the sake of this satisfaction, would pardon sinners and receive them to his favour. Here then we see, *Why* Jesus suffered thus: we discover the object which he had in view. He looked forward to the *consequences* of his sufferings. He foresaw the blessed effects which follow it. He foresaw that by *his* stripes *we* should be healed; that by the pain which *he* endured, *we* should be saved from eternal pain; that by the shame, to which *he* submitted, *we* should be saved from everlasting shame, and raised to high and endless glory. He looked forward to that

day, when the "Ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs;" when that great multitude, whom no man can number, having washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, shall "be presented by him faultless, before the presence of his Father with exceeding joy." This was the reward which he proposed to himself. This was the end, for the attainment of which, he bled and suffered and died. This was "the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame."

What, my brethren, shall we say to these things? What are the thoughts, the feelings, which this subject raises in us? Can we reflect on the *sufferings* of Christ; on his cross and passion; on his pain and shame; can we think on the *manner*, in which he bore these sufferings, on the fortitude, the meekness, the patience, the constancy which he shewed throughout; and not be filled with the deepest admiration of his exalted character? But when we further reflect on the *cause* of his suffering; when we call to mind the *object* for which he suffered; when we consider that for *us* men, and for *our* salvation, he underwent these things; that to save us from hell, which we had deserved, and to raise us to heaven, which we had forfeited, he "endured the cross, despising the shame;" what then are our feelings? Are we not filled with the most lively gratitude, as well as with the deepest admiration? While we admire his fortitude and constancy, are we not also sensibly touched with the thoughts of his goodness and compassion? Do we not feel something of our immense obligations to him? Are we not ready to say. 'Behold how he loved us?' What would have been our condition, if he had not "endured the cross, despising the shame?" How lost and desperate! Without Christ, without hope, without God in the world, we must have miserably perished. But now. how changed, how happy, how glorious is our state! Christ "hath once suffered for sins, the *just* for the *unjust*, that he might bring us to God."* By the blood of his cross, he has made our peace with heaven. We, who were afar off, are now brought nigh; and can draw near to God in the full assurance of hope. "Let our souls bless the Lord, and all

* 1 Peter iii. 18.

that is within us bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls; and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all our iniquities; who healeth all our diseases; who redeemeth our life from destruction; who crowneth us with loving kindness and tender mercies." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

But is there not also another feeling excited by this subject? While we read of the sufferings of Jesus; while we think of his wonderful compassion, of his amazing love; which led him for our sakes to "endure the cross, despising the shame;" are we not touched with something like remorse and self-reproach? Are we not concerned at the recollection of our sins, which helped to cause these sufferings? Are we not concerned to think of the little returns which we have made to Jesus, for all his love? He died that we might live: yet we have not lived to him. He remembered us in our low estate; yet we have forgotten him. He thought of us: yet days, and weeks, and years, have we lived without thinking of him. He "endured the cross" for us: yet we have been backward to take up our cross for him. Every little trial to which he has put us we have accounted a heavy burden, and hard to be endured. He, for us, "despised the shame;" yet we have been unwilling to suffer shame for him. Every little indignity, to which he has called us to submit; we have counted an intolerable hardship; and perhaps, to avoid the shame, have in fact denied our Saviour. Do not the thoughts of these things grieve us? Do we not feel sorrow and shame? Are we not angry with ourselves? Are we not self-condemned?

Let these humbling views of ourselves be cherished and increased. They will lower our self-esteem and exalt the Saviour in our hearts. Let us be confounded at the sight of our great unworthiness, contrasted with his glorious perfections. So shall we learn to walk more humbly and more closely with him. So shall we learn to live no longer to ourselves, but to him, who loved us and gave himself for us.

SERMON XXXV.

THE OBJECT AND EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—1 *John* iii. 3.

HOPE is the main spring of human actions, and the great cordial of human sorrows. Take away hope, and human life would be a dull and miserable blank. Equally necessary is hope to the christian life: nay, so necessary, that it is called "*the helmet of salvation*:" and we are even said to be "*saved by hope*."* Christian hope however, like every other christian grace, has its counterfeit. There is a vain as well as a good hope. While we read of the hope, that "maketh not ashamed," we also hear of "the hope of the hypocrite that shall perish." And many persons talk loudly of their christian hopes, who, it is to be feared, have little pretensions to the character of christians.

It is of great importance then, to enquire into this matter; to see what true Christian hope really is, and how it differs from every other thing, which takes to itself the name. There is indeed something peculiar in the foundation of Christian hope: for it is built altogether on Jesus Christ. There can be no true hope, but what springs from a knowledge of Jesus Christ: for it is only on his sacrifice and intercession for sinners, and on the promises given in him, that we can have any confidence towards God, and consequently any true and solid hope. Hence he is called "our hope," and "Christ in us the hope of glory:" and in this respect "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."† Here then should our first enquiries be made. On what is our hope placed? Is it placed on Jesus Christ, and on him alone; on his merits and mediation, and on the promises of God in him? Or are we building on some

* Ephes. vi. 17. 1 Thess. v. 8. Rom. viii. 14. † 1 Tim. i. 1. Col. i. 27. 1 Cor. iii. 21.

other foundation, or joining some other foundation with him? Are we placing our hope on something in ourselves, on our own works merits or resolutions? Are we placing it on any outward thing, on our privileges or professions? In this case we need go no further in the business. It is clear in the very beginning of our enquiries that our hope is not a true scriptural hope, for it is not founded on Jesus Christ.—But on the other hand, it is not every hope, which pretends and appears to be built on Jesus Christ, that is really a good hope. There are other marks by which it must be distinguished. There are other particulars, which must accompany it, in order to prove its title to a true scriptural hope. In this view the text may be consulted with great advantage. The apostle is speaking of christian hope: and his words are these, that "Every man who has this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." From which passage, we may collect two things respecting christian hope, which serve clearly to distinguish it from every other hope. These are,

I. Its object; what it looks to.

II. Its effect; what it leads men to do.

These two points I shall endeavour to explain. And may the Lord so bless the endeavour that it may be profitable to our souls!

I. Hope must always have some object in view. It must be looking to something. This is necessary to the very being of hope: for without this there could be no hope. The very idea of hope means the having in view something, which we desire to gain, and which, when gained, we suppose, will add to our happiness The worldly man desires to gain money, or ease, or power, or a great name. These are the *objects* of his hope; the things, to which he looks for happiness. The christian has also an *object* in view: something, to which he is looking to make him happy. What this is, I shall proceed to shew.

St. John calls the hope, of which he is speaking, *this* hope. "Every man that hath *this* hope:" a way of speaking, which plainly points at something that had gone before, and shews that the apostle had been saying something about christian hope besides what he says in the

text. Let us see what this was. We find him at the beginning of this chapter, breaking out into admiration of the wonderful love of God, in having brought such sinners, as men, into his favour and family. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" This leads him to speak of the great blessedness of true christians. "The world (indeed) knoweth them not because it knew him not." It neither values, nor sees their worth, and privileges. But adds the apostle, even "*now* are we the sons of God." True christians are *now* the special objects of his fatherly love and care. They are his children; and if children then heirs. There is a glorious inheritance provided for them. What this inheritance will be, they do not at present exactly know. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Enough, however, is certainly revealed to raise their thoughts, and to stir up their desires. "This we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is." And then follow the words of the text, "And every man that has *this* hope." What hope then does the apostle mean? The hope, doubtless, of which he had been speaking: the hope of being like Christ at his appearing. This is the christian's hope. This is the *object* which he has in view: the thing, to which he is looking for happiness.—Let us see what there is in this object, which distinguishes the hope of the christian from every other hope.

The being like Christ, at his appearing, may signify in the first place, the being like him as to the *outward* form. It may relate to the state of the *body*, when it shall be raised from the dead. Great and glorious will be the change, which, at the day of resurrection will take place in the body of the christian. "It was sown in corruption, it will be raised in incorruption. It was sown in dishonour, it will be raised in glory. It was sown in weakness, it will be raised in power. It was sown a natural body, it will be raised a spiritual body." It will be a glorious body, fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body: no longer subject to pain and sickness, to decay and death; but fitted for the heavenly and eternal state for which it is designed. And this is doubtless a part of

the christian's hope. He looks forward with joyful expectation, to the time, when death shall be swallowed up in victory; when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; when he shall no longer "groan in this tabernacle, being burdened, but shall be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven."

But this explanation of the passage, however true and important in itself, is far from being the only, or the chief thing here intended. The being like Christ at his appearing signifies, in the second place, the being like him as to the *inward man.* It relates to the state of the *soul* at the day of Christ's appearing. As the body of the christian will in that day be all glorious without, so his soul will be all glorious within: for in that day it will be perfectly "conformed to the image of the Son." When he shall appear, we shall be like him, "for we shall see him as he is." Christians now see something of Christ, but they see him *not as he is.* They see him through a glass, darkly. They see him by faith, but not by sight. Yet even now, a very surprising effect is produced on their souls, by merely this imperfect view of Christ. Even now, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory."* Even here, they bear some traces, however faint, of the divine likeness. What then shall be the case, when they shall see Christ far otherwise than they now see him? When the veil which now dims their sight, shall be taken away; when they shall "see him as he is," in all the splendor and majesty of his glorious person? The transforming power of his presence, will then be instantly and universally felt: all the remaining pollution of sin and infirmity will be done away for ever. The dross of sensual affection will at once be consumed before the brightness of his coming. The soul, seeing face to face, him, whom she so ardently loves, will reflect nothing but his pure and glorious image. Every spot and wrinkle, which have hitherto defaced her, will disappear. She will be holy and without blemish; all beautiful, all glorious within. Such will be the state of the soul at Christ's appearing; and such then is now the great object of the christian's hope. He longs to be

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

like Christ. He longs to be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit. He feels and laments the corruption of his nature; and therefore he looks forward with earnest expectation, to the time when this corruption shall be done away; when the victory, over the flesh, shall be complete; when he shall appear with Christ in glory; and "awaking up with his likeness, shall be satisfied with it."

We see then, what there is in the object of the christian's hope, which distinguishes this hope from every other thing, which takes to itself the name. It is not merely a vague, an uncertain sort of hope; a hope of happiness without any idea of what that happiness will be. It is not merely a hope of being with Christ, and of seeing his glory. It is not merely a hope of going to heaven, and of living in the presence of God. It is a hope, which, while it contains all these things, has still a clearer and more precise object in view. It is a hope of holiness: a hope of being perfectly holy, that *so* we may be perfectly happy: a hope of seeing Christ "as he is;" that by this sight of him, we may be made like him; and *thus* may become fitted for going to heaven, and for living with God in glory.

And now, my brethren, let us ask ourselves, is this our hope? Has our hope this object? Is this the thing which we have in view: the thing, to which we are looking for happiness? Do we hope to be like Christ, that we may be qualified for living with him, and capable of enjoying that happiness, which he has provided for us? Let us examine ourselves strictly on this point. Let us search and see what our hope is. If holiness be not a grand part of its *object*, our hope is certainly not the hope of the christian.

To assist us in this examination, let us consider the other particular here stated, respecting christian hope, namely,

II. Its effect: what it leads men to do.

As hope has always some object in view; something to which it looks for happiness; so it always sets a man to seek after that object, and to do what is in his power to obtain it. There cannot then be a better way of finding out what our hope is, than by seeing what it leads us to do. If wealth, or power, or honour be the things, which

we hope to gain; how will this hope influence our conduct? What will it lead us to do? It will lead us to use those means, which are most likely to make us rich, or great, or honourable. Thus on the other hand, if holiness be the object of our hope, what in this case, will our hope lead us to do? It will lead us now to seek after holiness. We shall be trying to become holy. This will be the *effect* of our hope. This is what it will lead us to do. And what is this but the very effect, which St. John in the text, declares that christian hope *always* produces. "*Every man* that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." It is a general, an universal rule, which admits of no exception. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? If a man really believe, that his happiness hereafter, will consist in being like Jesus Christ; if he really look forward to this likeness as the grand object of his hope, how can he do otherwise than *now* seek to become like Jesus Christ? How can he do otherwise, than now strive to become pure, even as Christ is pure? The future object of his hope must have a constant, an active, a powerful influence on his present conduct. If it have not, nothing can be plainer, than that he does not really believe and hope, what he professes to do. If, while he professes to have the hope of a christian, he yet willingly, continues unholy and impure, and reflects not, nor tries to reflect any part of the image of Christ, nothing can be plainer than that his professions are vain, and that, at the best he miserably deceives himself.

But let us, more distinctly see what this *effect*, of which we are speaking, is: what is meant by a *man's purifying himself*. This expression may seem to imply that a man is able to make himself holy, to cleanse his own heart, to sanctify his own nature, and so may *appear* to contradict the general doctrine of scripture, which teaches a very different truth. This doctrine is, that sanctification is God's work, and not man's; that the preparations of the heart are from the Lord: that it is he who cleanseth the heart, by the inspiration of his holy spirit; creates in us a new heart; and renews the soul after his own image and likeness. Nor is there any thing in the text, which at all opposes this doctrine, or differs from it in the least. We meet with many other expressions of the same kind, with

that in the text. The Lord himself says, by his prophet Ezekiel, "*Make you* a new heart and a new spirit." St. James, in like manner, says, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and *purify your hearts* ye double minded:" while St. Paul exhorts us, to "*cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." Do we suppose that these passages contradict the general doctrine stated above? No such thing. The scriptures cannot disagree with each other. When we meet with texts, which like those just cited, enjoin us to do something, which the general tenor of the Bible tells us that we cannot do; the way, in which we must understand such texts, is this: we must understand them as enjoining us to use those means, which God has appointed for attaining the thing in question, and in the faithful use of which he has promised that we shall attain it. Let us take this way of interpretation in the present instance; and then we shall see how the text is to be understood, "Every man that has this hope, *purifieth himself;*" that is, he does not cleanse, renew and sanctify his own heart, for that he cannot do; but he uses those means, which God has appointed, for the cleansing, renewing and sanctifying of the heart; and in the proper use of which, it is promised, that the heart shall be cleansed, renewed and sanctified. In virtue of this appointment, in reliance on this promise, he uses these means and thus *purifies himself.*

Here then, my brethren, we have another ground for self-examination. Does our hope produce in us *this* effect? Does it lead us thus to purify ourselves? In the first place, do we seek after purity? Do we seek, not only to be outwardly moral, but also to be inwardly holy? Do we think it not merely enough to regulate the conduct, but do we seek also to regulate the *motives* of our conduct: in short, not only to have clean hands, but also to have a pure heart? And while we seek this inward purity; do we faithfully and diligently use the means, which God has commanded us to use, in order to attain it? Do we earnestly beseech him to 'cleanse our hearts by the inspiration of his holy spirit?' Do we add to our prayers, watchfulness? Do we keep our heart with all diligence; examine with a jealous eye, its secret motives; check its first approaches to evil; and carefully guard every door, by

which sin may enter into it, especially that sin, be it what it may, by which we are most easily beset? Do we avoid, as much as we are able, such places, and persons, and employments, as are most likely to prove temptations to us? Do we faithfully attend on all the ordinances of God? Do we use them as means of growing in grace, and humbly expect in the use of them, to have our spiritual strength increased, and our souls more and more conformed to the divine image and likeness? In a word, do we now live in the spirit, walk in the spirit, mind the things of the spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the spirit: while after all our endeavours, do we still lament our little progress in holiness, and grieve, that notwithstanding we daily strive to grow perfect even as God is perfect, we yet remain so imperfect, are so far short of what we ought to be, and have so little of the mind which was in Christ Jesus?

Such is the *effect* which true christian hope will have upon us. If, what we call our hope, does not lead us to do these things, it is not *christian* hope; and to suppose that it is, is greatly to deceive ourselves. God grant then that we may have clear evidence on this point! Grant that we may not cherish a vain confidence, a foolish self-conceit, an arrogant presumption, in the place of that true, solid, humble, heart-purifying hope, which in the end, "maketh not ashamed."

Remember, my brethren, in conclusion, how closely christian hope and christian holiness are joined together. In fact they cannot be separated: nor can we have one, without the other: while they mutually confirm and promote each other. The greater our holiness is, the stronger will be our hope: as on the other hand, the stronger our hope is, the greater will be our holiness.—May the Lord, by his grace, increase in us both these blessed fruits of his spirit! May he write his law in our minds, purify us even as Christ is pure, and cause us to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us!

SERMON XXXVI.

ON THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE DANGER OF GRIEVING HIM.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.—*Ephesians* iv. 34

THERE are many truths in the Bible, which we could never have known, had not God revealed them to us: truths therefore, which are to be received altogether by faith, in a simple reliance on the divine word. One of the foremost of these, is the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, or of the subsistence of three divine persons in one undivided Godhead. In stating this doctrine, we use the word *person*, not because it *exactly* expresses the sense, which we intend to convey, but because we have no other word, which comes so near, to what seems to be the meaning of scripture. The inspired writers, when speaking of the Father, of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost, frequently apply to each of them such expressions, as are descriptive of a *person*. They ascribe to each *personal* acts and attributes; and make use of such language as, according to our ideas, can properly be used only of a *person*. Of this kind is the language of the text; "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby," or by whom, ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." *Grief* is a *personal* feeling. *Sealing* is a *personal* act. Hence we collect, that the Holy Ghost is a *person:* that although in some respects, he is one with the Father and with the Son, in the Unity of the Godhead; yet that in some other repects, he is distinct and separate from them. We pretend not to explain or comprehend this mystery. We receive it by faith; and humbly adore that God, who has thus graciously revealed himself to us.—With these remarks, arising from the text, I now proceed to a more particular consideration of the passage itself; from which I shall take occasion to point out to you two things.

I. The peculiar office of the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

II. The meaning and importance of the admonition here given respecting him.

I. The peculiar office of the Holy Spirit in our salvation is thus represented in the text. He "seals us unto the day of redemption." By the day of redemption is meant that day, in which the people of God will be put into complete possession of all those blessings, which have been purchased for them by the blood of Jesus. At present, this is far from being the case. For, though perfectly delivered from the condemnation of the law, and so far set free from the power of sin, as that it no longer has dominion over them, yet they still groan, being burdened with the remainder of original depravity, and too often, "find a law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin, which is in their members." The time indeed is coming, when they will be freed for ever, from this bondage of corruption. At death, their deliverance from the power and pollution of sin will be perfected. But even then their *redemption* will not be complete. Their bodies will still sleep in the grave, under the dominion of death; so that in this respect, they will still undergo the consequences of sin. But in due time this tyranny also shall be broken. "Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed." It shall be "swallowed up in victory." The grave shall give back its prisoners. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return with singing unto Zion." Their bodies shall be raised glorious, and immortal. And in that day their redemption will be complete. The day of redemption then, is the day of resurrection: that day, when the manifestation of the sons of God shall take place: when those that sleep in Jesus, shall awake to everlasting glory, shall be publicly owned as his people before the assembled world, shall be cleared from every charge, and admitted into the joy of their Lord.

This is the day mentioned in the text: and to seal us unto this day is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit of God. Let us see what this expression means. To seal us to this day is to prepare us, and to set us apart for it; to fix such a mark on us, as in that day, shall distinguish us from others, and make it fully appear to whom we belong. When a man sets his seal to a paper, he thereby

declares his approbation of it, and acknowledges it to be his own deed. Thus, those, who bear the seal of the spirit, will be approved by Christ, and acknowledged for his own, in the day of resurrection. He will set his mark upon them, and will own them for his children. But what then is this mark? What is this impression, with which the Holy Spirit seals the children of God? It is the mark, the impression of himself. It is holiness. A seal stamps its own image on the wax. And what image does the Holy Spirit stamp on the soul, but the divine image?—There is another passage in this epistle to the Ephesians, which both explains and confirms this meaning. "In whom," says the apostle speaking of Jesus Christ, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."* In this passage, which agrees with the text, in ascribing to the Holy Spirit the same office of sealing us unto the day of redemption; this seal is said to be the *earnest* of our inheritance. Now an *earnest* is a *pledge* of something to be bestowed and enjoyed hereafter: nay it is a *part* of it already bestowed, in order to assure us that, in due time, we shall receive the whole. According to this view, the seal of the spirit is a pledge and part of our future inheritance; a foretaste, as it were, of that happiness which will be enjoyed in heaven. And in what will this happiness chiefly consist, but in being made like unto God, capable of seeing him; of serving him, and of finding pleasure in his service? What then, is the present earnest and foretaste of heavenly happiness, but a renewal in part, now, to the divine image and likeness? What is the pledge of glory hereafter, but grace here? What is heaven already begun in the heart, but *holiness?* And what then is holiness, but that mark, by which the people of God are distinguished, and set apart unto the day of redemption? They are "a peculiar people;" "new creatures in Jesus Christ." They have been transformed by the renewing of their minds. They have put on the Lord Jesus Christ; they bear his image, and reflect his likeness. Faint indeed, is their present resemblance to him; and far short do they *now* fall, of that perfection,

* Ephes. i. 13, 14.

to which they shall *hereafter* come. But still, a clear, and a broad distinction prevails between their present and their former state, between *their* state and that of others. In their views and principles, in their tempers and affection; in their piety, humility, self-denial, and patient continuance in well-doing; they shew that they belong to God, and bear his image.—Such then is the seal of the Holy Spirit of God; and it is called *his* seal, because he only is the blessed agent in creating the soul anew. No man can sanctify himself. It is utterly out of his power to stamp the divine image on his own heart, and to seal himself unto the day of redemption. This is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit alone. He finds the soul when dead in trespasses and sins, and quickens it to newness of life. He convinces it of sin. He teaches it to come to Christ for pardon. He enables it to fight the fight of faith; puts into it holy desires; leads it in the paths of righteousness; reproves it when loitering; recalls it when wandering; revives it when fainting; supports it by divine consolations; sheds abroad in it the love of God; and fills it with peace and joy in believing. "All these things worketh that one and the self-same spirit:" and thus, by his secret operations on the soul, seals it unto the day of redemption. Let us now consider,

II. The meaning and importance of the admonition here given respecting this divine person.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." In entering on this subject, it may be necessary to guard against a mistake, into which the expression here used, might possibly lead us. When it is said; "*Grieve not* the Holy Spirit," let us not hence suppose, that the Holy Spirit is really capable of suffering grief. God cannot suffer, neither is he subject to human passions. Whenever expressions, which have this meaning, are in scripture applied to God; they are so applied merely to suit our apprehensions and capacities. Thus, when it is said in the sixth chapter of Genesis, that "it *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him at the heart;" it is not meant that God really *repented* or *grieved;* for it were impossible that he could do thus. But the meaning is, that men's wickedness was so great and provoking, that God might justly have repented of having made them;

that he might reasonably have looked on their incorrigible depravity with grief. Had a *man* met with the like ingratitude and disappointment, *he* would have repented and grieved. So also in the text when it is said, "*Grieve* not the Holy Spirit of God," we must understand the admonition to say; 'Conduct not yourselves towards this blessed and divine person, in such a manner as might justly give him offence; as might reasonably furnish him with a cause of grief!'——Suppose that you had a tender and valuable friend, who was anxious for your welfare, who with unceasing care watched over your interests, and was doing every thing in his power to promote and secure your peace and happiness. Suppose, that instead of being thankful to this kind friend for his care and watchfulness; instead of listening to his advice and following his counsels; you should slight his admonitions, should act in a manner directly contrary to his suggestions, and should prefer such company, places, and practices, as he especially warned you to avoid.—What would be the effect of such a conduct on your part? Would you not run the risk of provoking your friend to leave off from advising you, to withdraw his protection from you, and to give you up to the consequences of your folly and perverseness? Would he not justly have reason to be *grieved* at your ingratitude and obstinacy?—Such a friend, as you have seen, is the Holy Spirit of God. Such is his anxiety and watchfulness over your best and highest interests. Such is the tender concern, which he feels for your spiritual safety and happiness. Make not then such a return to him for all his kindness, as may subject you to the charge of *grieving* him. Despise not his admonitions. Turn not a deaf ear to his friendly voice. Provoke him not, by your evil conduct, to withdraw his influences. "Quench not the Spirit." "Do not despite unto his grace."—Such is the meaning of the admonition. Attend next to the importance of it.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Why? Because it is by him, that you must be sealed unto the day of redemption. Recollect what is the gracious part which he takes in your salvation; and then consider what the consequences of *grieving* him must be. If a sense of his

kindness and love cannot keep you from so great a sin, let a sense of your own danger restrain you. He only can renew your heart unto holiness, and make you fit for heaven. He only can give you the pledge and earnest of heavenly happiness, and can stamp the divine image on your soul. And if this image be not stamped on your soul, what will become of you? The day of redemption to others, will be no day of redemption to you. While the ransomed of the Lord, bearing his image, and sealed with his seal, shall in that day lift up their heads with joy, you will awake to everlasting shame and contempt. Wanting the mark which distinguishes the people of God, it will be clear that *you* belong *not* to that blessed company. And to whom will it be clear that you *do* belong? To him, whose likeness you will bear, to him, whom you will resemble in unholiness and sin, and with whom therefore, you will have your portion for ever and ever. Such must be the consequences of grieving the Holy Spirit of God. Such must be the just and certain punishment of your perverseness and ingratitude; if you now reject his friendly counsels, and by your disobedience provoke him to leave you to yourself.——Behold then, the importance of the admonition in the text. Your present peace, your eternal happiness depend on your compliance with it. What more need be said to engage your compliance? It must surely be your desire and resolution not to grieve the Holy spirit of God. In the hope that you thus desire and resolve, I shall point out, by way of application, some things, which directly tend to "grieve him," and of which therefore you will do well scrupulously to beware.

1. Beware of doing any thing, which your conscience, enlightened by the word of God, forbids you to do. The admonitions of conscience are the admonitions of the Spirit secretly striving with you. So that to shut your ears against these admonitions, is to shut your ears against the voice of the Spirit. And what more likely way can you take of grieving him, and provoking him altogether to withdraw his grace and mercy from you? We read of some who "concerning faith had made shipwreck." And how did they fall into this apostate condition, but by

"having put away a good conscience?"* Beware then of resisting this inward monitor. Does your own inclination, does the example or persuasion of others, tempt you to do any thing, which your conscience condemns; do it not. Nay, if you have only some doubts whether the thing be lawful or not, still abstain from doing it. For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. However innocently in itself the thing may be done; yet it cannot be done innocently by *you*, so long as you are not clearly convinced in your conscience, that it is lawful.

2. Beware of running into temptation. You have seen that it is a great part of the office of the Holy Spirit in sealing you to the day of redemption, to free you from the power and practice of sin. This is the chief design of all his kind reproofs and watchful care. If then, through carelessness or presumption, you thwart this merciful design, what can you expect, but to displease and anger him? If by wantonly running into temptation you shew, that you make light of that sin, which he accounts so great an evil; if instead of avoiding such places and companions, as will be most likely to stir up the lusts of your heart, you needlessly expose yourself to these dangers: what can you expect, but that your heavenly friend, thus slighted and provoked, will gradually forsake you? Eve fell by incautiously suffering her ears to listen to the tempter's voice, and her eyes to gaze on the forbidden fruit. Peter fell, by imprudently venturing into the very place, where his courage would be put to the hardest trial. Take warning by these examples. If you copy their misconduct you will fall like them.

3. Beware of indulging fleshly lusts. The Holy Spirit of God is a Spirit of purity: and nothing more effectually grieves him, than uncleanness and impurity. In this respect especially, "fleshly lusts war against the soul," for they drive away him, who is the soul's best friend. How offensive sensuality and intemperance are to this heavenly monitor St. Paul plainly intimates, when he says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit." And again, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will

* 1 Tim. i. 19.

God destroy."* "Abstain" then, my brethren, "from fleshly lusts." "Flee fornication." "Be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." Be pure not only in act, but also in word. "Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient. Nay further, indulge not impurity even in the thoughts. "Keep thy heart with all diligence." "Cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

4. Beware of practising deceit and falsehood. The devil was a liar from the beginning and the father of lies. To deal in deceit, and to indulge a false tongue is especially to do his work, and to shew ourselves his servants. Whereas the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth." He delights in truth, and abhors falsehood. Every lie, whether spoken or acted (for we may *act* a lie as well as *speak* one) is a sin directly committed against him. When Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for the daring lie, which they had told, St. Peter expressly tells them, that they had "lied to the Holy Ghost," and that they had "agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord."† A sin then, which in this instance, was thus awfully punished, cannot but greatly displease and grieve him. "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." Avoid most carefully a practice so odious in itself, so ruinous in its consequences, so gratifying to your worst enemy, so offensive to your best and kindest friend.

5. Beware of profaning the Lord's day. This is a day peculiarly set apart for the glory of God, and the good of your souls. It is a day, which the Holy Spirit of God more especially employs for carrying on his great and gracious work. It was on this day, that he came down on the apostles. It is on this day, that he is particularly present at his ordinances. He has commanded you to keep this day holy, and promises that it shall be a blessed day to those who keep it thus.—To profane then this holy day; to waste it in idleness, in worldly pleasure, or worldly business; to absent ourselves from the ordinances of God, to lose the benefit of hearing his word; what is the evident tendency of such a conduct, but to grieve the Holy

* Ephes. v. 18. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. † Acts v. 3—9.

Spirit of God, and to drive him from our hearts? And how many, by such a conduct, *do* drive him from their hearts! How many of those, who die by the hand of the public executioner, date their ruin from this cause! With heartfelt anguish they look back to their early years, when by wasting in sin the sacred hours of the sabbath, they grieved the spirit of the Lord, and wearied out his patience and long-suffering towards them.—Be admonished by such examples. You, who are young, especially take warning. Keep holy the sabbath day. Slight not the ordinances of God. Provoke him not to say of you, "He is joined to idols, let him alone."

6. Beware of cherishing evil and malignant tempers. The spirit of the Lord is a spirit of love. His fruits are meekness, gentleness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness. How then can he dwell in that heart, where wrath and hatred are suffered to reside? To indulge an angry, unforgiving temper, is expressly said to "give place to the devil;"* and consequently to offend and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. No sooner does the apostle deliver the admonition in the text, but he immediately adds, as in some respect pointing out his meaning: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice." Profit, my brethren, by these directions. Cultivate mild, peaceable and charitable dispositions. "Be kind one towards another, tender-hearted." Let the heavenly graces of the spirit abound in you. So shall he delight over you. So shall he seal you unto the day of redemption.

* Ephes. iv. 26, 27.

SERMON XXXVII.

ON THE RECIPROCAL DUTIES OF MINISTERS AND PEOPLE.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.—*Hebrews* xiii. 17.

THE relation, which is formed between a minister of the Gospel, and the people committed to his charge; between him, whose office it is to give religious instruction, and those who are concerned to receive it, is highly important. It is a relation most sacred in itself, and most awful in its consequences: and the duties, which spring from it, are such as ought to be well understood by both parties. To this purpose, St. Paul's admonition in the text may be profitably consulted. Speaking to the christian converts among the Hebrews, he reminds them of the respective duties, which they and their spiritual pastors mutually owed to each other; as well as of the obligations, by which they were severally bound to the performance of these duties. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Taking this passage for our guide let us first attend to what is here said of the duty and obligation of ministers.

I. The duty of ministers to their people is thus described. They "have the rule over them," or, as the word may properly mean, have the *guidance* of them; and "watch for their souls."

Nothing can be clearer, than that God desireth not the death of a sinner; that he is not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance. In his great love to the souls of men, he has provided an all-sufficient salvation for them. He has given his only-begotten Son to be their Saviour. He reveals to them these glad tidings in his written word, which he has stored with the most precious promises, and most gracious encouragements. But men are prone to evil. Notwithstanding all that God has done for their salvation, they are prone to neglect their souls, and to forget the one thing needful. Hence God, to his other gifts, has mercifully, added that of a standing ministry. He has appointed in his church, a succession of men, whose peculiar office it should be, to preside over the spiritual concerns of the people committed to their charge; to guide and go before them in heavenly things, not as "having dominion over their faith, but as being helpers of their joy;'" to open to them the scriptures; and so by putting them in remembrance of the things which belong unto their peace, to stir them up to a suitable and holy practice, and to a greater diligence in making their calling and election sure. Such in general is the duty of a minister to his people as contained under the expression of "having the rule over them." But there is another expression here used, which directs us to go further into particulars. "They watch for our souls." This expression denotes that no small degree of diligence, of perseverance and of anxiety is necessary for the discharge of the ministerial office. At least it implies, that a minister, in the faithful exercise of his calling, is required to perform two things.

First, solemnly to admonish the people of their danger. If he see them living in a state of careless unconcern, of presumptuous security, or of fatal self-deception, he must endeavour to awaken them to a sense of their awful condition. To this end he must reprove, rebuke, exhort. He must affectionately warn them of their error and of the misery, to which it leads. He must faithfully set before them the terrors of the Lord, and the threatenings of scripture; and shew them what will assuredly be the end of those, who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In thus discharging his trust, he may indeed perform a very unpleasant task. He may speak many disagreeable truths, and may run the risk of offending those,

whom he sincerely loves, and would anxiously endeavour to please. But if he do less than this, can he be truly said to *watch for the souls of his people?* Does he perform the office of a faithful watchman, whose business it is to give notice of the approach of an enemy, and to awaken those who are sleeping securely, when danger is at hand? Nay, rather does he not betray his trust, and leave those to perish, whom he should strive to save and rescue?

But further, he is required,

Secondly, to look out for every convenient opportunity of doing good to the souls of his people. There are some seasons, at which the mind is more disposed to admit religious impressions, than at others. In times of sickness and under the pressure of affliction, the heart is more likely to be softened and the conscience to be alarmed. At such seasons the kind attentions of the minister will, it is probable, be favourably received: and the wholesome truths, which at another time might be heard with impatience, will be listened to with meekness and sometimes even with pleasure. The minister, then, who *watches for the souls* of his people, must avail himself of such opportunities. He must be forward to meet, and careful to improve them. Nor must he *confine* his endeavours even to such favourable seasons. He must be "instant in season, and out of season." He must teach not only "publicly, but from house to house," "rightly dividing the word of truth," and giving to every one his due proportion of spiritual food.

Such, on the whole, we may gather from the text, to be the duty of ministers to their people. Now observe the obligation which they are under to a faithful performance of their duty. "They watch for your souls, as they that *must give account*." Ministers must give account of their ministry. It is a talent committed to their keeping; and their own everlasting happiness or misery depends on the diligence and fidelity with which they improve it. They are indeed "Stewards of the mysteries of God." But they are *only* stewards: and "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." They are shepherds and have the charge of the flock. But there is a chief shepherd, to whom they are answerable for the exercise

of that charge. Attend to the following reproof of the shepherds of Israel, for their carelessness and neglect of the flock: a reproof to which christian pastors, if guilty of like carelessness and neglect, are equally liable. "The diseased have ye not strengthened; neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought that which was lost."—"Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field; because there was no shepherd: neither did my shepherds search for my flock: but the shepherds fed themselves and fed not my flock: Therefore, O, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand." Listen again to the solemn admonition which the Lord addressed to the prophet Ezekiel; an admonition, which may be addressed with equal force to every minister of the Gospel: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet, if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."*

From these passages, it plainly appears, how strict will be the account which ministers will be required to give; how awful is the state, and how dreadful will be the doom of those, who neglect their duty; and consequently what strong obligations they are under, to watch for the souls of their people.

These obligations indeed are no where more distinctly stated, than in the ordination service of our church. The following extract from that solemn charge which every minister receives from the bishop, on his admission to the order of priests, contains a clear and most scriptural view

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18, 19.—xxxiv. 4—7, 8, 2, 10.

both of the duties and responsibility of the pastoral office. 'Have always printed on your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The church and congregation, whom you must serve, is his spouse, and his body. And if it shall happen, that the same church, or any member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance, by reason of your negligence, you know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue. Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, towards the spouse and body of Christ; and see, that you never cease your labours, your care, and diligence, until you have done *all that lieth in you*, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfection of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion or for viciousness of life."—Judge, my brethren, from this passage, what is the duty of a minister towards his people, and how great are his obligations to discharge it. Let us now turn to the other side, and enquire into the duty of the people towards their ministers.

II. It must be plain that duty begets duty. Where there is a duty on the one side, there must be a duty to answer it on the other side. If ministers be required to have the rule over their people, and to watch for their souls; what must be required of their people in return but obedience and submission? Thus it is stated in the text, "*Obey them* that have the rule over you and *submit* yourselves." Let us then see what are the nature and extent of this obedience and submission.

Are ministers to rule over the *persons* of their people? Are they to lord it over their consciences? Such is not the obedience, which this passage enjoins. Such is not the submission which the ministers of the Gospel claim. They have not forgotten what Christ hath said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them: But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your

servant."* It is in the affections, it is in the hearts of their people that the ministers desire to rule. The obedience, which they ask for, reaches only to the office which they hold. The submission, which they require, is a spiritual submission. Such are the obedience and submission here enjoined, and they include at least the following particulars.

1. It is the duty of the people to attend on their minister with a disposition to receive and follow his instructions. Not that they are required to believe or to do what he tells them, merely because he tells them. This would be to put *him* in the place of God; and *his* word in the place of the divine word. But still they are to regard him, as the person, who fills the office appointed for their spiritual edification, and from whose labours and ministry they may hope to derive a peculiar blessing. In this respect they are required to submit to him; to obey his word, while it agrees with scripture, and to honour the servant for the sake of that Heavenly Master, whose commission he bears and in whose name he speaks.

2. It is the duty of the people to bear with the importunity and solicitude of their minister, in watching for their souls. They are not to take offence at his plain speaking, nor be impatient under his friendly admonitions. Should his zeal sometimes appear to be indiscreet, or his interference unseasonable; yet still they are to take what he does in good part, and not to forget, that the advice may be sound and the intention in offering it sincere, though the manner of doing it may, seemingly, be harsh, and the endeavour, in their opinion, ill-timed.

3. It is the duty of the people to join with their minister in such plans and attempts, as may best promote the object of his ministry. Does he, for example, point out any particular means, by which immorality and ungodliness may be checked, or the cause of true religion may be encouraged and strengthened? Does he propose that such an ungodly custom should be left off, or such a salutary practice should be adopted? In these cases his people are justly required to attend to his proposals; and by their countenance and support to forward his endeavours. If they act otherwise; if, while he is thus watching for

* Matt. xx. 26, 27.

their souls; if, while he is recommending and introducing such measures, as may be most likely to advance their spiritual good, they refuse to concur in his designs and even actively to assist in accomplishing them, they clearly fail in the obedience which they owe to him: they do not comply with the spirit of the injunction in the text, nor "submit themselves," as they ought to do.

From this view of the people's duty towards their minister, let us turn to the obligations which they are under to discharge it.

In the first place, the very *office* of the minister imposes it on them. If the minister be bound, at the peril of his own soul, to rule over the people and to watch for their souls, doubtless they are bound at the same peril, to wait on his ministry, and to submit to his spiritual guidance. The same authority, which prescribes to him his duty, prescribes also to them their duty. And the same reasons, in both cases, enforce the performance of it. The end for which ministers are ordained, namely, to save the souls of the people committed to them, cannot be attained, unless both parties diligently fulfil their respective duties. To what purpose does the minister watch, if the people do not submit? To what end is he commanded to rule, if *they* are at liberty not to obey? The ministerial office is God's appointment; and whenever it is faithfully executed; to reject it, is to reject not man but God. Remember who hath said, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."*

But in the second place, the *object*, which the minister has in view, strongly obliges the people to discharge their duty towards him. For whose soul does he watch, but for theirs? For whose happiness, for whose salvation does he labour, but for theirs? For whom does he spend his strength, wear out his spirits, encounter opposition, and endure reproach, but for them? How he may do them the most good; how he may best advance their spiritual interests, is the frequent subject of his meditations in his study, in his walks, and on his bed. Is it not reasonable then, that his people should concur with his designs, and have the same object in view? Is it not reasonable, that

* Luke x. 16.

by an affectionate attachment to his person and ministry, they should endeavour to lessen his difficulties, and repay his toils?

But let it be considered, thirdly, that in this, as well as in every other instance, duty and interest are closely joined together. It is the people's *interest* to obey them that have the rule over them, and to submit to those who watch for their souls. The minister, let it be recollected, must give an account of his ministry. And do we suppose that this account relates only to himself? Doubtless, it relates to his people also. He must hereafter give a final account of his own diligence and faithfulness in his office; but even now, he must give, as it were, a daily account of the success of his labours, and of the reception which he meets with, from those to whom he is sent. And according as this account be favourable or otherwise, he cannot but give it with joy or grief. But which, think you, will be most profitable for them? Will it be most for their advantage, that in his private devotions, with thankfulness and gladness of heart, he should bless God for the humility and teachableness which he finds among them; in that they "hear meekly the word, receive it with pure affection, and bring forth the fruits of the spirit;" or that he should be compelled with tears and sorrow of heart to complain of their obstinacy and unbelief, and to testify against them, that they are a people, who refuse instruction, and will not obey the word of the Lord? The text expressly tells us, that such a testimony will be *unprofitable* to them. And doubtless, it must be so. It must be displeasing to God. It must provoke his anger against them; and *may* lead him in the end, to say; "It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways; I therefore swear unto them in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my rest."

Such is the view given in the text of the duties, which ministers and their people mutually owe to each other, and of the obligations, by which they are severally bound to the performance of these duties. On the whole, one reflection strongly forces itself on the mind. If such be the awful and sacred relation between a minister and his people; if such be their respective duties and obligations, then how greatly do both parties need the constant and

affectionate intercessions of each other! How earnestly should the people pray for their minister, that he may distinctly see his duty, and have grace, wisdom, and courage, faithfully to perform it! How earnestly should the minister pray for his people, that they may submit to his spiritual guidance, and may profit by his labours among them! If this mutual intercession were more generally practised, the most happy effects might justly be expected to follow. Prayer is the hand which brings down blessings from heaven. And prayer would bring down a blessing both on ministers and people. Great grace would be upon them all. The word of God would run and be glorified. Sinners in great multitudes would be turned from the error of their ways; and the servant of God would be strengthened and built up in their most holy faith.

In the words of our church then, let us beseech Almighty God, that, he would 'make all bishops and pastors diligently to preach his holy word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory for Jesus Christ's sake.'*

SERMON XXXVIII.

CONVERSION TO GOD A REAL CHANGE OF HEART.

I am sought of them that asked not for me. I am found of them that sought me not: I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.—*Isaiah* lxv. 1.

IT was God's design from the beginning, to call the Gentile nations into his church; and in due time, to admit them to all the blessings and privileges of the Gospel. The Jews, indeed, were his peculiar people: but this distinction in their favour, was made only for a particular purpose, and for a limited season. They were chosen especially for this end, that they might preserve in the world, the knowledge of the true God, and thus prepare the way for the coming of that promised Redeemer, who,

* See collect for Saint Peter's day.

when he should come, was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of his people Israel."

It is this great event, to which the text chiefly relates, as we are taught by St. Paul, who brings it as an express prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles. Under the guidance of such an inspired interpreter, we cannot err in making this application of the passage. "I am sought of them, that asked not for me: I am found of them, that sought me not. I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by name." In this view we may consider the passage, as setting before us three things.

I. The wretched state of the Gentiles before their conversion to christianity.

II. The surprising and glorious change, which was then wrought in them.

III. The simple, but powerful means by which this great work was accomplished.

1. In speaking of the wretchedness of the Gentiles, before their conversion to christianity, it is not meant to describe them as savages, or barbarians, altogether sunk in want and ignorance, and destitute of the necessaries, the conveniencies, or even the elegant comforts of life. Many of the Gentile nations, in these respects, had made considerable progress. So far as worldly things were concerned, they came very little, if at all, behind ourselves. In arts, in arms, in learning, in agriculture, and in commerce, they greatly flourished. They were rich and powerful, and produced many eminent characters, whose talents and exploits have commanded the admiration of mankind. But notwithstanding all these things in their favour, the Gentile world was *wretched*. There was one grand point, in which they were totally wanting: one point, for the want of which, no other advantages, however great or many, could make amends. They knew not God. In this respect, with all their riches, they were miserably poor; with all their knowledge, they were miserably ignorant. In this respect indeed, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Nay, they not only were without God in the world, but they even made no search and enquiry after him. Such is the representation, which the Almighty gives of the Gentiles

in the text. They "*ask not* for him;" they "*sought* him not." Surrounded with the wonderful works of God, they yet, asked not who was the maker of them. They bowed down before stocks and stones; before four-footed beasts and creeping things; and satisfied with these religious performances, they sought no further. Senseless and stupid, as the idols which they worshipped, they gave themselves over to lasciviousness, and worked "all uncleanness with greediness." Considered in this light, the Gentiles were wretched. Considered, in respect to their state as sinners, ignorant of the nature and holiness of the true God, and of the only way to his favour and acceptance, they were sunk in the most deplorable wretchedness.

II. Observe in the next place, the surprising and glorious change, which was wrought in them. "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not." See the Gentile nations coming forth out of that dreadful darkness, in which they had been so awfully plunged! See them awakening from their spiritual sleep!—They are *seeking* that God for whom they formerly asked not. Brought to discern his infinite perfections, his majesty, holiness, and power, they tremble before him. Convinced of their apostacy and guilt they are imploring his mercy, and seeking reconciliation and forgiveness.—They have *found* that God, whom once they sought not. They have discovered his goodness, grace, and glory in the Gospel; and confounded and ashamed on account of their former transgressions, they are now crying out; "What have we to do any more with idols?" Contemplate the glorious change! See those, who were lately sacrificing to devils, now worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth: those, who lately were led captive by Satan at his will, now delivered from his wretched slavery, and become the willing servants of God: those, who lately lived in lust, in rapine, in the commission of the most execrable crimes, in the gratification of the most abominable passions, now made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, in all holy conversation and godliness. In these particulars, contemplate the glorious change foretold in the text: the glorious change, which, at the appointed time, gradually

took place in the Gentile world; when, in the figurative language of the prophet; "The desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." The parched ground became a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water:" when, "instead of the thorn, came up the fir tree, and instead of the briar came up the myrtle tree."*

III. Consider further, the simple, but powerful means, by which this glorious change was accomplished.—"I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." The Lord, by his word, revealed his grace and glory, to the heathens. He sent forth his apostles into all lands, bearing the glad tidings of salvation; proclaiming the knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ whom he had sent; and inviting all, even the chief of sinners, to take refuge in the arms of a crucified Saviour. "Behold me, behold me;" "Look unto me and be ye saved;" "Come unto me and I will give you rest;" Believe on me and live; was the substance of that Gospel, which was preached among all nations; and which, wherever it was preached, however weak it might seem to the carnal eye, became powerful, through the Spirit, for pulling down the strong holds of Satan, and for setting up the glorious kingdom of Christ. The doctrine of the cross, though, to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness, yet proved itself, by its effects, to be both the wisdom and the power of God.

Such are the views set before us in the text, of the wretched state of the Gentiles, of their conversion to christianity, and of the means, by which it was accomplished. Nor, let us suppose, that these are points, in which we can feel but little interest. On the contrary, we are deeply concerned in them, and ought to regard them, with feelings of the most lively gratitude. Let us remember that however deplorable was the state of the Gentile world, before its conversion to christianity; such was once the state of this country and of those who lived in it: such, at this moment, would have been still their state, if God had not sent his light and truth among them: if, when they were as yet, a nation not called by his name, "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no

* Isaiah xxxv, 1. 7. lv. 13.

hope and without God in the world," he had not said to them, by the preaching of his word, "Behold me, behold me." Is he now sought where once he was not asked for? Is he found where once he was not sought? Are we not now bowing down before those dumb and senseless idols, which our forefathers worshipped? Do we know the truth as it is in Jesus? Have we access with confidence, through his blood to a mercy seat? Are we blessed with the word of life, with the means of grace, with the hope of glory? Surely, these are mercies which call for all our thankfulness: Mercies, in which we ought to feel the liveliest joy, and to take the deepest interest.. Then let us lift up our hearts to God, in praise and prayer. Let us thankfully praise him, for the glorious light which he has vouchsafed unto us. Let us earnestly pray to him, that we may not receive this grace in vain. Nor let us feel only for ourselves. Let us feel for others also. Let us pity those nations, which yet lie in darkness and in the shadow of death. Let us long and labour for their conversion. Let us pray that God would send forth among them his glorious light, till all the kingdoms of the earth shall see his salvation, and become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.

But, my brethren, there is another way of applying the text, in which we are still more deeply concerned. While this prophecy receives its grand accomplishment, in the general conversion of the Gentile nations, it is also fulfilled in the particular conversion of every individual sinner. The preaching of the word is still the appointed instrument which God usually blesses for bringing back sinners to himself: and whenever this glorious work is done; whenever the proud self-righteous Pharisee is brought to pray, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? whenever the unjust and worldly publican is led to smite upon his breast and cry for mercy: whenever the dissolute and sensual prodigal is prevailed on to confess his sins, and to seek reconciliation with his offended Father: whenever any one of these instances occur, then is the prophecy again fulfilled. With respect to all such returning sinners, it may be truly said, "God is sought of them that asked not for him, he is found of them that sought him not."—Blessed are those to whom the words

can be thus applied! Blessed are those who are now seeking the Lord; though in times past they sought him not: for they that seek shall find!—But what shall we say of ourselves? Is this blessedness ours? Can these words be thus applied to us? Can God say of us, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not?" In short, are we penitent, humbled, converted sinners? This is a point on which it concerns us to examine ourselves with seriousness and impartiality. It is a great, an invaluable privilege, that we have been born in a country, where the true light shineth. We have reason, indeed to bless God that he has conferred this mercy on us. But let us remember, that this privilege in itself is not enough. With all the outward splendour of the Gospel shining around us, we may be all darkness within. With respect to the actual condition of our souls, we may be in no better a state, than if we belonged to a country still sunk in heathenism and idolatry. Christians in name, we may yet be Gentiles in heart. No outward dispensation can of itself change the heart. By nature, all are Gentiles. Pride, selfishness, aversion from God and holiness, love of sensual gratifications and an idolatrous attachment to the world, are dispositions which naturally reign in every child of Adam. But till these evil dispositions are broken, and in a measure subdued, there can be no true religion in the soul. The heathen, bowing down before his idols of wood and stone, is as near to the kingdom of heaven, as the merely nominal christian, who though he call himself a servant of Christ, and attend on the ordinances of the Gospel, still keeps his natural, carnal heart. For what is the difference between them? In their outward circumstances indeed they do not exactly agree: but in *heart*, they are the same. They both alike are ignorant of the true God: they both alike love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil: they both alike are under the dominion of selfish, sensual, covetous desires; they both alike are strangers to Christ the hope of glory. In a word, they both are descended from the corrupt stock of Adam, and consequently both bear his image, and inherit his depraved and fallen nature. Grace only can change the heart: and till a man undergo this change, let his name, his country, his profession, his

privileges, be what they may, he is still but "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." This is a truth extremely offensive to the carnal mind: and we may almost judge of our own state, by the feelings with which we hear this truth asserted. The natural man listens with impatience to the spiritual doctrine of the renewal of the heart. It appears to him foolishness: and thus either excites his ridicule or provokes his wrath. But it is a doctrine, to which the experience of all real christians, without any exception, bears witness. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this one point they all agree. They all agree in declaring, that by the power of the grace of God, working together with his word upon their hearts, they have been brought into a state very different from that in which they naturally were. They have now a spiritual discernment of those scriptural truths which once appeared foolishness unto them; they feel the constraining influence of motives, to which they were formerly strangers: they experience hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, of which they once had no conception. What is the language of one? 'The time was when I knew nothing of Jesus Christ. I was careless of my soul. I thought not of eternity. Sunk in ignorance and vice, I was wholly given up to sensual enjoyments. I had no pleasure, but in gratifying my fleshly lusts. I wrought the will of the Gentiles, and lived without God in the world. But the Lord, in mercy, brought me to myself. By his word and spirit, he quickened me, when dead in trespasses and sins, and breathed into my soul a spiritual life. Trembling and astonished, I was led to seek that God and Saviour, for whom I had not asked. Blessed be the riches of divine mercy, I did not seek in vain. I found him, whom once I sought not. I found him faithful to his promise and mighty to save. He has blotted out all my sins and filled my soul with peace. He has delivered me from the bondage of corruption, and enables me to walk in newness of life. I stand a monument of redeeming grace, to the praise and glory of his holy name.'—What is the confession of another? 'Once I loved the world, and the things of the world, with supreme delight. My affections were all set on earthly objects. My only aim was to grow rich and increase my substance. As for God, I had no

knowledge of him; no fear of his wrath, no desire after his favour. If my worldly affairs prospered, my utmost wishes were gratified. But the Lord met me in my ruinous course. He mercifully opened my eyes which the God of this world had blinded. He taught me to see the vanity of all earthly objects and pursuits. He taught me to compare the things which are seen with the things which are not seen. He revealed to me the only valuable treasure, a treasure in heaven. There my affections now are fixed. The Lord himself is my portion. I prize his favour above all things. There is none upon earth, that I desire besides him. When he lifts up the light of his countenance upon me, I find far greater and more genuine pleasure, than I ever felt at the increase of my corn, and cattle, and gold.' Listen to the declaration of a third. 'Great has been the divine mercy to me. I was long led captive by Satan, when I suspected it not. I was puffed up, with a proud conceit of my own goodness. Because my conduct was free from gross sins, I presumptuously thought, that I was righteous before God. At least, I supposed that my good actions would fully make amends for my evil deeds; and consequently that I had nothing to do with being "saved by grace through faith." But it pleased the Lord to take away the veil from my eyes. By his spirit he convinced me of sin. He shewed me what I really was. He set before me the spiritual demands of his heart-searching law. He led me to see how far short my fancied goodness fell of this holy standard. Thus he humbled my pride. He taught me to cry for mercy; to renounce my own righteousness; to receive with thankfulness, the gift of free salvation; and to "live the life which I now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God." He hath "brought me, by a way that I knew not. He hath led me in paths that I did not know. He hath made darkness light before me, and crooked things straight. These things hath he done unto me, and hath not forsaken me."—In using this language, I trust that I am speaking to the experience of some, who hear it. They bear witness to the truth of what I say. They know that religion is a real, an inward work; a work of grace upon the heart. May they daily know more of its power in purifying their affections, in leading them to a more

simple dependence on Jesus Christ, in fitting them for every good work, and in filling them, with all the fruits and consolations of the spirit!

But on the other hand, I must still be afraid, that there are others, who know nothing of this matter; who, when they hear of a work of grace on the soul, of the conversion of the heart to God, are ready to ask; "How can these things be?" My brethren, your very ignorance on this subject, is of itself a strong ground for suspecting, that you are as yet strangers to true religion. Without some knowledge of the doctrine concerning which I speak; without some inward testimony to the truth of it, you have great reason to fear that, at present you "have neither part nor lot in the matter." God is still an unknown God to you. The Gospel of Christ is still an unknown Gospel. You are unacquainted with your own spiritual wants and weaknesses. You see not the gracious and all-sufficient remedy provided. Calling yourself free, you are still a slave under the bondage of corruption, a prisoner under sentence of condemnation.—But if this be your case; is it therefore desperate? Are you void of all hope? God forbid! No man's case can be desperate, while Jesus is still saying to him, "Behold me, behold me." None can be void of all hope, while Jesus is still revealing himself to them, and calling on them to look on him and be saved. It is thus that by his word and his ministers, he still speaks to you. It is thus, that in the Gospel, he still reveals himself to you and calls on you to behold him as the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Behold him coming down from heaven to seek and save your soul. Behold him dying on the cross to expiate your sins. Behold him ascended into heaven to plead your cause. Behold him, though hitherto you have neglected to ask for him, yet ready to manifest himself unto you. Behold him, though hitherto you have not sought for him, yet willing to make all his goodness pass before you. No longer then, turn away in proud disdain, and reject his gracious invitations. No longer shut your eyes and refuse to see. Seek him now, even now, and you shall find him full of mercy, grace and love. Ask for him now, and you shall see his glory.

May his spirit accompany this call! May he bring home

this message with power to your heart? Then you will *indeed* behold him. You will have such different views of him, from those which you have hitherto had, that with holy Job, you will cry out: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now, mine eye seeth thee;" or adopting the admiring language of the queen of Sheba, you will exclaim: "It was a true report that I heard; howbeit I believed not the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen it: and behold the half was not told me."*

SERMON XXXIX.

DESCRIPTION AND BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.—*Rom.* viii. 28.

THE truly religious man is the only truly happy man. The profane and ungodly may scoff at this remark. Worldly persons may disregard it, and count those happy whom God abhorreth. But, whatever may be said to the contrary, it is a true saying and worthy of all acceptation, that "Blessed are the people, who have the Lord for their God."

If there be one passage of scripture, which, above others, sets forth the blessedness of God's people, it is the text. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Let us here consider,

I. The description given of God's people.

II. The glorious truth declared concerning them.

I. The Bible, while it so plainly sets forth the blessedness of God's people; no less plainly tells us, who they are. It does not indeed mention their names, but it describes their character. It shews us *who* they are, by shewing us *what* they are. The text goes even further

* Job xlii. 5. 1 Kings x. 6, 7.

than this. It not only describes the character of God's people; but it also points out the means, through which they have acquired this character. While it shews us *what* they are, it also shews us *how* they became so. They are those "who love God, and are the called according to his purpose." They are lovers of God. This is their character. How did they become so? They have been "called according to his purpose." Their loving God is the consequence, the effect of their being *thus* called. Let us see then what is meant by this call.

The purpose of God is to save sinners by faith in his Son Jesus Christ; to reconcile them to himself "through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he calleth them by his Gospel." All persons therefore, to whom God, whether by his ministers, or by his written word, makes known the Gospel, in one sense are *called*. They are bidden to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. They are invited to share the blessings and privileges of the Gospel. But not all who are *thus* called, are called in the sense here meant. They are not all called "according to God's purpose." Many, it is to be feared, neither comply with the purpose, nor answer the end, for which they have been called. If they profess to receive the Gospel, yet they receive it not in the power and love of it. They hold the truth in unrighteousness; are destitute of the spirit of faith; and continue ungodly and impenitent.—But there are others, who are in a different state: who are not only called but chosen: who not only hear the call, but through grace, obey it. Being "by the spirit convinced of sin, of righteousness and of judgment:" of the greatness and guilt of their own sin in particular; of the all-sufficient righteousness and justification provided in Jesus Christ for every penitent believer; of the certain and dreadful judgment, which awaits unpardoned sinners: they have fled to the Gospel for peace and safety. Believing "the record which God has given of his Son;" by faith they have sought an interest in that Son. They have committed their souls into his hands: they have come to him as their only and Almighty Saviour; "of God made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." Thus have they been made partakers of the grace of the Gospel. Henceforth they

live by faith. By faith they forsake their sins. By faith they overcome the devil, and the flesh, and walk in newness of life.—These are "the called according to God's purpose." They are called not only by the word, but by the spirit, awakening the conscience, persuading the will, and bringing the soul to Christ. And the consequence of being thus called is this, that they "love God." Their "faith works by love."

To love God, and to love him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, is our bounden duty and service. God has the strongest claim to our love. He has every thing in himself, which can deserve and engage our love: and thus to love him is at once the highest privilege and happiness of our nature. But, to our shame be it spoken, that, naturally, we love him not. Such is the dreadful depravity of our fallen nature, that far from loving God, we do not like "to retain him in our knowledge, and have even an aversion from him: for the carnal mind is enmity against God."* But the persons described in the text have, in this respect, been greatly altered. That Holy Spirit who sanctifies all the elect people of God, sanctifies them. He has wrought a surprising change in their hearts. He has renewed their nature. He has subdued their enmity. He has taken away the carnal mind. Having called them "with a holy calling, he has given them far other thoughts of God, far other dispositions towards him. He has shed abroad in their hearts, a sense of God's great love in their redemption. He has taught them to look up to him, as God in Christ, reconciling them unto himself. "He has made all his goodness pass before them," as it is revealed in the person and Gospel of his Son: till "thus beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they have been changed into the same image from glory to glory." They have learned to think with hope and pleasure on those glorious perfections, which once filled them with terror and despair. They meditate with gratitude and delight on the mercies, which they have received from God; and love him, because he first loved them. Such has been the consequence of their being "called according to God's purpose." "*Because*

* Romans viii. 7.

they are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying Abba Father."*

"Do you ask then, whether *you* are one of God's people; whether *you* are one of the called according to his purpose?" This question must be answered by another: Do you love God? If you love him not, you cannot be one of the persons described in the text; for they "love God." Now consider what the true love of God is, and how, if true, it will shew itself.

The love of God is a love of him as he really is: a love of him in all those glorious perfections, by which he has made himself known to us in the Bible. Many persons, it is to be feared, deceive themselves in this matter. They think that they love God, when so far from loving him, they do not even know him. The fact is, that the God whom they profess to love, is not God, as revealed in the Bible, but God as represented by their own imagination. Drawing their notions of him, not from his word, but from their own corrupt minds, they suppose him to be a being, who if he does not actually love sin, yet has at least, no utter hatred of it: as a being, who is too merciful to punish sin; and will readily admit the excuses which sinners make for themselves. Such are their notions of God. They "think him altogether such a one as themselves;" and therefore they love him. For the same reason the heathen loved his idols; for he believed them to favour the sins, of which he himself was fond; and to delight in those evil practices, to which his own heart was most inclined.—But the true love of God is a love of him in his true character. To *love* him in the scriptural meaning of the word, and as those who are called according to his purpose love him; is to love him as he really is, and because he is what he is. The man, who truly loves God, would not wish him to be otherwise, than he has shewn himself to be.

Is it *thus* then, that *you* love God? Do you believe him to be a just and holy God: so holy, as to hate sin with a perfect hatred; so just, as by no means, to clear the guilty? Do you believe him to be "a jealous God," "a consuming fire;" "searching the heart, and trying the reins;" "requiring truth in the inward parts;" "of purer

* Gal. iv. 6.

eyes than to behold iniquity;" the terrible avenger of all who live ungodly; the righteous judge, "who will render to every man according to his works?" Are these your thoughts of God? And having these thoughts, do you yet love him? Do you love him because he is so just and holy? Would you not wish him to be less just and holy? The man who would strip God of any of his glory, cannot love him. The language and feeling of the soul which truly loves him are these: 'O Lord! though thy justice righteously condemns me because of my iniquities; and thy holiness makes me utterly ashamed because of my uncleanness; yet I love thee the more for these thy glorious perfections. Were it possible, that I could believe thee to be less just or holy, I should love thee less.'

Consider further, if you have the true love of God in your heart, how it will shew itself.

If you truly love God, you will love every thing belonging to him. You will love his law and service. You cannot love God and yet count his commandments grievous. The service of those whom we love, is a pleasant service. Such, if you love God, you will esteem and find his service.—You will love his ordinances. You cannot love God, and yet regard his sabbaths as weariness. You cannot love God; and yet treat his word with indifference. You cannot love God; and yet negligently, or formally attend his worship. Rather you will say and feel with David; "One day in thy courts, is better than a thousand in the tents of wickedness." "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day." "My soul thirsteth for God; for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"—You will love the people of God. You cannot love God; and yet not love his people. The people of God are his children: and how is it possible that you should love him that begat, and not love those, who are begotten of him? If you truly love God, you will, for his sake, feel a love towards all men, but especially towards those, who, as you believe, bear his image and are beloved of him. Though poor, despised, and worthless in the sight of men, you will regard them with preference and peculiar affection; and will particularly seek to do them good, "because of the Lord their God."

It has been necessary to dwell the longer on this point, because so much depends on it. If you love not God, you are not, as yet, at least, "called according to his purpose:" you have not that mark which all his people have. You want that inward work of the spirit in your heart, which only can make you the children of God, by disposing you to obey his call, and by putting his love into your soul. At the same time, do not hastily conclude that you do not as yet love God, because you may not feel your love to him so strong, so warm, so constant, as you could wish to feel it. God's people have always found it thus. They have always lamented the weakness and coldness of their affection for him. See then, whether this be the case with you. While you feel that you love not God as you ought to do, are you longing to love him more? Are you really ashamed and grieved, that you love him so little? Do you esteem this hardness of heart to be sin and utterly condemn yourself on account of it? Do you pray, that you may love God more? Do you strive to increase his love in your heart? Are you fearful of displeasing him, and to this end, are you watchful over all your ways? God grant! my brethren, that many of us may have a well-grounded hope that we are indeed the Lord's people! May the Holy Spirit shine into our hearts, and enable us, when we examine ourselves in the way which has been stated, to see that we are indeed the "called of God according to his purpose!"

Such are the persons described in the text. We consider,

II. The glorious truth declared concerning them. "All things work together for good to them." This truth, says the apostle, *we know*. We are fully convinced, we have undoubted assurance of it. The perfections of God; the promises of the Gospel; the history and experience of God's people in every age; join in declaring that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Here we are first reminded of God's universal providence. He ruleth over all. Nothing happeneth *by chance*, as men, often thoughtlessly, and sometimes profanely, say. It is God, who ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth. The least, as well as the greatest events, which

come to us; come to us by his permission or appointment. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, but he seeth it. There is not a hair in our head, but is numbered.

Secondly, we are here taught, that as God's providence ruleth over all; so it is especially exercised in behalf of his people. In all that he does, he has their interest at heart, and graciously orders ever thing with a view to their advantage. Their happiness he desires and intends; and as he has power to fulfil his designs; so he has also wisdom to see, what means are best suited to the end. Thus, under his Almighty care, all things work for good to his people. *All things*, not only those which appear to be most prosperous and favourable, but those also, which wear a different appearance; losses, disappointments, troubles, sorrows, are made instrumental in his hand, for accomplishing the purposes of his love.

Thirdly, we are led to notice the *manner*, in which these purposes are accomplished. "All things work *together* for good:" not *singly*, not *separately*, but *together*. All the events, which befall the real christian, are not only contributing by themselves, to work out good for him; but are all helping one another to make that good greater, and to make it complete. Even those things, which appear least likely to be for his advantage, are yet really promoting it. They are parts of that great whole, which God is employing for his good. Every event is so bearing its particular part in the general work; so supplying what is wanting, correcting what is hurtful, and aiding what is useful in some other event; that if only one should be left out, the work itself would be unfinished and imperfect. They are "all working together for good." What a striking example of this truth do we find in the history of Joseph! His cruel treatment from his brethren; his servitude in Egypt; the false accusations of his mistress; his disgrace and imprisonment were so many steps, which under the direction of infinite wisdom were made subservient to his future advancement. In this long chain of events, had one of the links been wanting, we see not how he would have risen to that high station in the court of Pharaoh, which enabled him afterwards to become the preserver of his family, and of the whole land of Egypt. Doubtless, on looking back upon the Lord's dealings with

him, he would feelingly own that, 'All things had worked together for good to him.'

What however is the good chiefly meant in the text? Is it temporal good? Is it worldly prosperity? Do all things work together to make the people of God rich and great and prosperous in the world? Experience will not allow us to suppose, that this is the meaning of the text. We often see them poor and destitute, and weighed down with afflictions, even to the very end of their days. Nor indeed would the scriptures themselves agree with such an interpretation. When they speak of what is good for man, they look not to his temporal, but to his spiritual good. They speak of what is good, not for his body, but for his soul; not for his present, perishing condition; but for his future everlasting state. And this is the sense, in which we must understand the text: "All things work together for *good* to them that love God;" for good to their souls; to their spiritual and eternal interests. All the dispensations of God towards them are designed to make them fitter for heaven; to make them holier now, that they may be happier hereafter.

Thus trials and temptations discover to them their weakness; stir up their watchfulness; put life into their prayers; and call forth their graces into action. Thus losses and disappointments wean their hearts from the world; teach them to set their affections on things above; and quicken their desires and exertions after their heavenly inheritance. Thus afflictions and sicknesses lead them to a stricter self-examination, and to a closer walk with God. Nay, thus even their very infirmities and mistakes, though not approved by the Lord, are yet oftentimes mercifully overruled to their spiritual good. By these, their self-confidence is weakened; their self-abasement is increased; their godly sorrow is renewed; and Christ is made more precious to their souls.

But there is no giving the full meaning of this truth declared in the text. The longer we consider it, the more we find in it. The Lord's people are his chosen; his beloved; his heritage; the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. He will soon come and take them to himself. In the mean time he watches over them with a fatherly care. He guides, he feeds, and protects them.

In all which he does with them, in all which he calls them to do, he is consulting and furthering their everlasting happiness; daily making them more meet for their heavenly inheritance, and qualifying them for the enjoyment of a more exceeding weight of glory. So that, in the words of the apostle, we may say; "All things are theirs: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs: for they are Christ's and Christ is God's."*

There are two purposes for which I would shortly apply this subject.

1. Let those who are *not* yet "called according to God's purpose," be stirred up to seek an interest in the glorious privilege of which we have been speaking. You have seen, my friends, the happiness of being the Lord's people. You cannot but allow, that blessed is the state of those, to whom all things are working together for good. But is this your case? Are *you* thus blessed? alas! Far otherwise. While you continue ungodly, your state is the very reverse of that which has been described. While you love *not* God, all things are working together for *evil* to you. The gifts of providence, which you abuse or waste, by increasing your accountableness, are increasing your guilt. Prosperity hardens your heart, and by furnishing you with the means of gratifying your fleshly lusts, proves a snare and destruction to your soul. Adversity makes you impatient, leads you to vent your unhumbled feelings in murmuring and blasphemy, and thus brings into action the hidden wickedness of the heart. In short, every event, which befalls you, tends in some way or other, to treasure up for you wrath against the day of wrath: while ever hour, which comes, brings nearer that dreadful moment, when the evil, which now pursues impenitent sinners will for ever overwhelm them. Consider then these things, while yet there is time. Listen to the call of the Gospel. Be obedient to it. Open your heart to receive it. Pray, that the Holy Spirit may powerfully constrain you to repent and turn to God, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Pray that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." "So iniquity shall not be your ruin." So shall you become the called the chosen

* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

of God. His love shall be within you: and all things shall work together for your great and everlasting good.

2. Let those, who already hope that they are the Lord's people, be stirred up to make a practical and profitable use of the truth before us. "All things are working together for your good:" for the good of your soul; that best, that most valuable part of you: Let this thought reconcile you to all the events which may befall you. However seemingly adverse and unfavourable, they are yet those, which your heavenly Father, in his love and wisdom sees to be best for you. Are your wishes disappointed? Are your plans crossed? Are your hopes delayed? Be assured that disappointments, crosses, and delays are necessary for you. Are you in heaviness through manifold temptations? Remember, that there is a need for these things, and that the Lord knows what that need is. He says unto you, as he said unto Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." At present you may not always understand his dealings with you; nor see at first, the particular good, which every trial is intended to produce. Nor is there any reason that you should see or understand these things *now*. Recollect, that you are walking "not by sight, but by faith." It is enough for you now to know, that all things are working together for your good. Strive to obtain an inward witness to this truth, by growing in grace, and drawing good out of every event. Strive to convince others of it, by letting your profiting appear unto all men; by letting them see, that whether things are going well or ill with you in this world, you are still daily becoming fitter for a better world; still growing more meet for partaking of the inheritance of the saints in light.

SERMON XL.

MOTIVES TO DILIGENCE AND EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.—*Hebrews* iv. 11.

ST. PAUL, in this part of his epistle, in order to stir up the Hebrews to greater diligence and earnestness in their religious concerns, reminds them of what had befallen their fathers in the wilderness. Through unbelief and disobedience, they had lost the inheritance, which God had provided for them, and had provoked him to swear in his wrath, that they should never enter into his rest. Let their children take warning by the remembrance of these things, and not fall after the same example of unbelief. God had provided for them, a better inheritance. Through the Gospel, he had revealed to them a heavenly Canaan, an eternal rest prepared and kept in store, for all those, who by patient continuance in well-doing look for glory and honour and immortality. "Having then a promise of entering into this rest, let them not seem to come short of it." On the contrary adds the apostle in the text, "let us *labour* to enter into that rest." Let us spare no pains, let us neglect no means, which may secure to us an interest, in this glorious promise.

Such is the meaning of the exhortation in the text. From this view of it, we see that it belongs to us, as well as to the Hebrews. We are called upon as strongly as they were, to "*labour* to enter into that rest," which "remaineth for the people of God. The same considerations, which should have weighed with *them*, ought to weigh with *us*. These may be regarded as chiefly two:

I. That without labouring we can never enter into heavenly rest.

II. That this rest, when we shall have entered into it, will abundantly repay us for all our labour.

These two considerations I shall now endeavour to

explain and enforce. The Lord grant that we may so feel the weight of them on our hearts, as to be persuaded to comply with the exhortation in the text!

I. I am to shew, that without labouring, we can never enter into heavenly rest.

Man is not sent into this world to be idle. He is required and forced to labour. According to the sentence denounced on him after the fall; "In the sweat of his face he must eat bread."* Such, indeed, is the present state and constitution of things, that without labour, nothing useful, or excellent can be attained. Without labour, we cannot acquire the comforts and conveniences of life. Without labour, we cannot arrive at distinction and pre-eminence. But while such is the case with respect to this present world, can we suppose that labour is unnecessary, with respect to the world to come? Can we suppose that spiritual life is to be maintained without labour; or that heavenly rewards are to be procured without it? While the honour, which cometh from man, is the fruit of much toil and industry; is the honour, which cometh from God, to be obtained without these things? Far otherwise is the doctrine of the scriptures. They teach us, that heaven will be the reward of vigorous exertion and of patient perseverance. They direct us to "*work out* our salvation, with fear and trembling;" to "*labour* for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" to "*give diligence*, to make our calling and election sure;" to "*strive* to enter in at the straight gate." They compare a life of religion to a *warfare* and a *race*, bidding us, to "*fight* the good fight of faith;" to "*so run* that we may obtain;" to "*press towards* the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God." All these are ways of speaking, which clearly convey the idea of earnestness and exertion; and imply the necessity of *labouring*, in order to enter into heavenly rest. St. Paul indeed, in his own case strongly asserts this necessity: for we find him saying; "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."†

* Genesis iii. 19. † 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

But while it is thus maintained that without labouring, we cannot enter into heaven; let us not suppose, that any countenance is given to the notion, that man is able to procure his own salvation. Far be such a thought from us. Salvation is the work and the gift altogether of God. He has wrought it for us, and given it to us. "Death is the wages," the due desert and merited earning of sin: but "eternal life is the gift of God:" not earned, not merited by man; but freely given to him of God. "God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." All the merit of our salvation is in Jesus Christ.' His sufferings and obedience unto death, were the procuring cause of it. His blood was the price of it. Even the faith, by which we apply it to ourselves, is his gift. From first to last, salvation is of grace. He justifies us *freely*: bestows on us the blessings of the Gospel "*without money, and without price*;" and "works in us, both to will and to do, *of his good pleasure*." Man's works, merits and obedience have, *in this respect*, nothing to do with his salvation. It is given not to him who worketh, but to him "who believeth on him, that justifieth the ungodly."*—But does not this statement go too far, and prove too much? If we be thus saved, freely by grace, through faith, and not by our own works and doings, where is the necessity of that *labour*, which I am recommending? If heaven be given to us solely through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, what occasion is there for our *labouring* in order to our entering into that rest? Or indeed if it be through faith, that we enter in at all, how can we be said in any degree to *labour*? These are questions, which can be readily answered: and which involve in them, no real contradiction or difficulty. Let me remind you what the christian life, or the life of faith, is. It is a course of thinking and acting, directly contrary to all our natural ideas, desires and propensities. It requires us to walk, not by sight, not by sense, which we are all prone to do; but by faith, "as seeing him, who is invisible," and living on the word and promise of an unseen Saviour. It requires us to keep this faith in constant and lively exercise; when we are prone to distrust and unbelief. It commands us to be humble and

* Romans iv. 5.

lowly in our own conceit, when we are naturally proud and high-minded. It requires us to crucify the flesh, when we are prone to indulge it: to mortify the deeds of the body, when we are disposed to gratify them; to abolish the whole body of sin, when we are inclined to spare and favour it. It bids us daily to deny ourselves and to take up our cross, when we love to please ourselves and to avoid the cross. It commands us not to love the world, and the things of the world, when we naturally love nothing so well. It enjoins us not to fear man, not to value his favour, not to regard his anger and reproach, not to be led away by his example, when we are naturally disposed to do all these things.—This is what the life of faith requires: and need I ask, whether much *labour* is necessary, for enabling us thus to oppose all our natural ideas, and to act directly contrary to all our natural inclinations? Does it require no exertion, rather does it not require great and constant exertion, thus to swim against the stream, to stem the powerful torrent of [illegible]ruption, and so to overcome the course of this present evil world, as to be enabled not only to make a stand against it, but even to move in an opposite direction? Let those who are making the trial, be asked the question. Say to those, who are now living the life of faith; who, while they are trusting to be saved by grace through faith, are yet striving to bring the body under, and to keep it in subjection; who are endeavouring to overcome their natural love and fear of the world; who are aiming to submit their will, in all things to God's will, and to bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ; who are wrestling "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places."—Say to such persons; 'What think you of this matter? Is there much labour required in doing these things? Do you find the life of faith an easy work?' They will tell you, that thus to live by faith, is the most difficult of works: that it requires great and continual labour, unwearied diligence, unceasing watchfulness; and that without this labour, and diligence and watchfulness, they would find it impossible to keep their ground, much less to make any progress in the way to heaven. This is the testimony, which

such persons will give. And such are the only persons, whose testimony can be of any value in the case: for they only, who have made trial of the way of faith, can tell us what it is, and what *labour* is requisite for walking in it. On their testimony then, as well as on the general testimony of scripture, we fully conclude, that, without labour, we can never enter into that rest, which "remaineth for the people of God."—I shew,

II. That this heavenly rest, when we shall have entered into it, will abundantly repay us for all our labour.

We know not at present, how great will be the happiness of heaven: neither is it probable that at present we could comprehend it. The Bible, indeed, to give us some ideas of it, describes it by such things as are suited to our understandings. Hence we find it set forth as "a kingdom," "a throne," "a crown," "an incorruptible inheritance," an "exceeding weight of glory." But perhaps, there is no way of describing it, which gives to us more clear and solid notions on the subject, than this used in the text. When heaven is said to be a place of *rest*, we can understand something of what is meant. When we read that, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: for they rest from their labours;" we can form some notions of what this blessedness will be, because we can understand what the labours are, from which they will rest.

In the first place they will rest from their *bodily* labours. What is the life of a very large part of mankind, but a continued succession of toil and labour? From the cradle to the grave, they work hard for a subsistence: "they rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." This however, is but a part of what is meant by *bodily labours*. Under this expression, we may reckon all those sufferings, of every kind, to which the body is liable, and under which it so often labours. Hunger and thirst, cold and heat, pain and sickness, the infirmities of age, and the approaches of death are among those evils, under which we here groan being burdened. But from these evils there shall be an everlasting deliverance in heaven. There shall be a rest from all these labours. "There shall be no more death; neither shall there be any more pain."

The body shall be raised incorruptible; no longer subject to sickness or decay. It "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the heat nor sun smite it." It shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; and be thoroughly fitted for heavenly and never ending life.

Secondly, there will be a rest from all the labours *of the mind.* Under this head, are included those numerous afflictions, which now fall upon our minds, weigh down our spirits, and are far heavier, to be borne, than even those which affect the body. How many and deep are the sorrows, which are now occasioned, by worldly troubles and losses; by the misfortunes, the unkindness, and the death of friends; by the malice of enemies; by slanderous reports; by tormenting fears; by a thousand evils, which continually assault us. But to all these, there will be an end in heaven. There will be a rest from all these labours. In that blessed seat of peace and happiness, there "will be no more sorrow, nor crying." "Every tear shall be wiped away, from every eye: and the days of all mourning shall be ended."

In the third place, there will be a rest from *spiritual labours.* We have seen that the christian is here engaged, in a constant struggle, with the devil, the world and the flesh. Assaulted from without by temptation, and from within by corruption, he has no rest day nor night. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and hourly wages war in his heart: while the effects of this spiritual conflict are frequently such, as to compel him with the Psalmist, to "go, mourning all day long;" and with the apostle to cry out; "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in heaven there will be an end to all these troubles, a rest from all these labours. There the warfare shall cease, the struggle shall end. In heaven, there will be no sin, no temptation. The devil will no longer be able to hurt the soul, by his horrid suggestions: for he will have no entrance thither. The world will no longer spread its alluring temptations; for there will be a new heaven, and a new earth, in which will dwell righteousness. The flesh will no longer pollute, distress and impede; for it will be destroyed for ever. Freed from all these enemies, and perfectly renewed to

the image of Christ; the christian will cease from his spiritual conflict, and will "find rest unto his soul."

From this view of the subject, we may form some notion of heavenly happiness. Great, without doubt, will be the happiness of resting from all these labours; these labours of body, mind, and soul. But this is not all, which the word rest here signifies. It has a further and a most important meaning. It gives to us, a still clearer and more distinct idea of that glorious blessedness, which awaits the saints in light. It is used to describe that unspeakable delight, satisfaction and enjoyment, which the soul will experience in seeing God face to face. Thus God is said to have rested on the seventh day. In six days, having completed the work of creation, on the seventh day he beheld it, with infinite complacency and delight. He saw that all was good, and was satisfied with this fresh display of his own glorious perfections. Thus will the soul rest satisfied in heaven with the sight which it will then obtain of God's glorious perfections. Even on earth, God is the only true rest for the soul. And the soul, which is alive unto God, both knows and feels it to be so. In vain it seeks for rest in worldly things. They cannot satisfy it. They yield it no true delight. It may wander among them in search of happiness; but, like Noah's dove, it can find no rest, till it go back to the ark. It was under a feeling conviction of this truth, that David said, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" * Return unto God who only is *thy* rest, 'the ark of thy salvation; where only thou canst find security and peace.' But if such be the delight, with which the soul here rests in God, where its knowledge of him, at the best, is so little and imperfect; what will be its joy and bliss hereafter, when it shall rest in him, as its full and everlasting portion, and know him even as itself is known?—See then the rest, which "remaineth for the people of God:" a glorious rest: a rest from all their labours: a rest in God, as their joy, their portion, their exceeding and eternal great reward. Will not such a rest abundantly repay us for all our labours? When we shall have once entered into it, shall we think that we have suffered too much, on the way to it? What, in that hour, will be our thoughts?

* Psalm cxvi. 7.

Shall we say to ourselves, 'I have laboured in vain. I have toiled to no purpose. I bestowed more pains coming to heaven, than I now find it to be worth. Rather shall we not say? 'O, bliss unspeakable! glory inconceivable! What were all the labours, which I endured in coming hither, compared with the rest which I now feel? Do I wish that I had laboured less; that I had bestowed less pains in resisting and overcoming the enemies of my salvation? What! Though I then did sow in tears; yet now, I reap in joy. Though I then did suffer affliction with the people of God; yet how light was that affliction, compared with the eternal weight of glory, which it has wrought out for me! I now indeed, find, by a blessed experience the truth of those words, which I so often heard in the days of my flesh; that my "labour has not been in vain in the Lord."'

Such are the considerations which I proposed to explain and enforce. What is the practical conclusion, which they press upon us? Seeing that [illegible] a rest remains for the people of God; and that without labouring, we can never enter into it, let *us* labour, my brethren. Let us give all diligence, and take all heed, that *we* may enter into this rest. Let us not, through negligence or sloth, through a willingness to gratify the flesh, or an unwillingness to bear the cross, come short of so great salvation. As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, let us fight manfully under his banner. "Laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus:" who himself entered not into glory, but first he suffered. Though we may have much to endure in a religious course; yet let us not be discouraged. Let us look forward to the rcompense of reward. Let us remember that there will be a glorious, an everlasting rest from all our labours. In due time we shall reap if we faint not.

But I fear there are some, who, notwithstanding the conclusion thus forcibly pressed on them, will still choose the service of the world, and the work of sin. Alas! my brethren, pride not yourselves on your wisdom, for you are making a most foolish, a most miserable choice. Sin is a hard master: and the world's service a laborious

service. And what will your wages be? Everlasting shame, sorrow, and torment. To *you* there remains no rest. For *you*, there will be no rest day nor night. As here you have no rest from sin; so in hell, you will have no rest from suffering. Lay this truth to heart now, before it is too late. Break off your sins by repentance, while the spirit is yet striving with you. Listen unto him, who has said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

THE END.

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